MA‘ARIFUL-QUR’AN

By

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Volume 1

(Surah Al-Fatihah, Al-Baqarah)

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله وكفى، وسلام على عباده الذين اصطفى

FOREWORD

by

Justice Maulanā Muḥammad Taqi Usmāni

Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is the name of a detailed Urdu commentary of the Holy Qur'ān written by my father Maulanā Mufti Muḥammad Shafī' (رحمة الله عليه). He was one of the eminent scholars who served as a professor and as a grand Mufti of Darul-Uloom Deoband, the well-known university of the Islamic Sciences in the sub-continent of India. In 1943, he resigned from Darul-Uloom, due to his active involvement in the Pakistan movement, and when Pakistan came into existence, he migrated to Karachi where he devoted his life for this new homeland of the Muslims and served the country in different capacities. He also established Darul-Uloom Karachi, an outstanding institute of Islamic Sciences on the pattern of Darul-Uloom Deoband, which is regarded today as the biggest private institute of higher Islamic education in Pakistan.

He was a prolific writer who left behind him about one hundred books on different Islamic and literary subjects. Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was the last great work he accomplished four years before his demise.

The origin of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān refers back to the third of Shawwal 1373 A.H. (corresponding to the 2nd of July 1954) when the author was invited to give weekly lectures on the Radio Pakistan to explain selected verses of the Holy Qur'ān to the general audience. This invitation was accepted by the author on the condition that he would not accept any remuneration for this service and that his lectures would be broadcast without any interference by the editing authorities. The permanent title of this weekly programme was

"Ma'āriful-Qur'ān" (The Wisdom of the Holy Qur'ān) and it was broadcast every Friday morning on the network of Radio Pakistan.

This series of lectures continued for ten years upto the month of June 1964 whereby the new authorities stopped the programme for reasons best known to them. This series of lectures contained a detailed commentary on selected verses from the beginning of the Holy Qur'ān upto the Sūrah Ibrāhīm (Sūrah no. 14).

This weekly programme of Radio Pakistan was warmly welcomed by the Muslims throughout the globe and used to be listened to by thousands of Muslims, not only in Pakistan and India but also in Western and African countries.

After the programme was discontinued, there was a flood of requests from all over the world to transfer this series in a book-form and to complete the remaining part of the Holy Qur'an in the shape of a regular commentary.

These requests persuaded the esteemed author to revise these lectures and to add those verses which were not included in the original lectures. He started this project in 1383 A.H. (1964) and completed the commentary of Surah al-Fatihah in its revised form and started the revision of Surah al-Baqarah. However, due to his numerous involvements he had to discontinue this task, and it remained unattended during the next five years.

In Shawwal 1388 (1969) the esteemed author suffered from a number of diseases which made him restricted to his bed. It was during this ailment that he restarted this work while on bed and completed Sūrah al-Baqarah in the same condition. Since then he devoted himself to the "Ma'āriful-Qur'ān". Despite a large number of obstacles in his way, not only from the political atmosphere of the country and the difficult responsibilities he had on his shoulders in different capacities, but also from his health and physical condition, he never surrendered to any of them and continued his work with a miraculous speed until he accomplished the work in eight volumes (comprising of about seven thousand pages) within five years only.

After appearing in a regular book-form, Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was highly appreciated and widely admired by the Urdu-knowing Muslims throughout the world. Thousands of copies of the book are still circulated every year, and the demand for the book is so increasing

that it has always been a problem for its publisher to satisfy the demand to its optimum.

A Few Words about the present English Translation of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān

Let me say a few words about the present English translation of the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān.

Although a large number of English translations of the Holy Qur'ān is available in the market, yet no comprehensive commentary of the Holy Qur'ān has still appeared in the English language. Some brief footnotes found with some English translations cannot fulfil the need of a detailed commentary. Besides, they are generally written by the people who did not specialize themselves in the Qur'ānic sciences, and their explanatory notes do not often reflect the authentic interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān. Some such notes are based on an arbitrary interpretation having no foundation in the recognized principles of the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, and are thus misleading for a common reader.

On the other hand, during the last few decades, the Muslim population has increased among the English speaking countries in enormous numbers. These people and their new generations need a detailed commentary of the Holy Qur'ān which may explain to them the correct message of the last divine book with all the relevant material in an authentic manner which conforms to the recognized principles of *tafsīr* (the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān).

Since Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was the latest book written on these lines and was proved to be beneficial for a layman as well as for a scholar, it was advised by different circles that its English translation may fulfill the need.

It made me look for a person who might undertake the task, not only with his professional competence, but also with his commitment to serve the Holy Qur'ān.

Fortunately, I succeeded in persuading Prof. Muḥammad Ḥasan Askarī, the well-known scholar of English literature and criticism, to undertake the translation. In the beginning he was reluctant due to his strong sense of responsibility in the religious matters, but when I assured him of my humble assistance throughout his endeavor, he not

only agreed to the proposal, but started the work with remarkable devotion. Despite my repeated requests, he did never accept any honorarium or a remuneration for his service. He was a chain-smoker. But he never smoked during his work on Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, which sometimes lasted for hours.

In this manner he completed the translation of about 400 pages of the original Urdu book and 156 verses of the Sūrah al-Baqarah, but unfortunately, his sudden demise discontinued this noble effort. Strangely enough, the last portion he translated was the commentary of the famous verse:

ولنبلونكم بشيئ من الخوف والجوع ونقص من الاموال والا نفس والثمرات
وبشرالصابرين O الذين اذا اصابتهم مصيبة قالوا انا لله وانا اليه راجعون O

> And surely, We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger and loss in wealth and lives and fruits. And give good tidings to the patient who, when they suffer a calamity, say, 'We certainly belong to Allah and to Him we are bound to return'.

Prof. Askari passed away in 1977, and due to my overwhelming occupations during the next 12 years, I could not find out a suitable person to substitute him. It was in 1989, that Prof. Muhammad Shamim offered his services to resume the translation from where Prof. Askari had left it. I found in him the same sincerity, commitment and devotion I had experienced in the late Professor. Moreover, he had decided to devote the rest of his life to the service of the Holy Qur'an without any financial benefit. Here again I tried my best to persuade him to accept some kind of honorarium, but it was in vain. He started his work from the Verse 158 of Surah al-Baqarah and has now completed the translation of the first two volumes of the original Ma'ariful-Qur'an and is working on the third volume.

Both Prof. Muḥammad Hasan Askari and Prof. Muḥammad Shamīm have insisted that their translations must be revised by me from the religious point of view. For this purpose, I have gone through the typescript of the translations of both of them and suggested some amendments where it was necessary.

The translation of Prof. Askari had been started at a time when the esteemed author of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was still alive. We were fortunate to receive some guide-lines from the author himself. He had

advised the translators not to be too literal in translation to sacrifice the natural flow of the text. Moreover, he had emphasized that while rendering his book into English, the requirements of English readership must be kept in mind. Some discussions may be dispensed with. Similarly, many paragraphs may be condensed in the English version in order to avoid repetition.

The esteemed author had authorised me for suitable decisions in these matters. Both the learned translators, despite their earnest effort to reflect the original text as accurately as possible, have followed, in consultation with me, the said advices of the author himself. However they have never tried to sacrifice the original concept of the text for the beauty of language alone. Particularly, in the juristic discussions of the book, they have been very strict in the translation, lest some change in the style should creep in and distort the accurate connotation of the Islamic injunctions. In such places, the reader may feel some difficulty. However, a more concentrate reading can easily remove it.

Translation of the Holy Qur'ān

The original Urdu Ma'āriful-Qur'ān had not given a new translation of the Holy Qur'ān itself. Rather, the esteemed author had adopted the Urdu translations of Maulanā Maḥmoodūl-Ḥasan (Shaikhul-Hind) and Maulanā Ashraf Ali Thānavī on which he based his commentary. While rendering the book into English, we had three options about the translation of the Holy Qur'ān:

(a) To adopt any one of the already available English translations of the Holy Qur'ān, like those of Arberry, Pickthall or Abdullāh Yousuf Alī.

(b) To translate the Urdu translations used in the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān into English.

(c) To provide a new translation of our own.

After a great deal of consideration and consultation, we elected to work on the third option, i.e. to prepare a new translation of the Holy Qur'ān. The reasons behind this decision were manifold which need not be detailed here. In short, we wanted to prepare a translation which may be closer to the Qur'ānic text and easier to understand. For this purpose, we formed a committee with the following members:

1. Prof. Muḥammad Shameem.
2. Mr. Muḥammad Wali Raazi.
3. This humble writer.

This committee has accomplished the translation of the Holy Qur'ān upto the Sūrah Yūsuf and is still going on with this project.

The committee has all the famous available translations of the Holy text before it, and after a deep study of the relevant material found in the classical Arabic commentaries, lays down the new translation in as simple expressions as possible. While doing so, we have tried our best that the different possible interpretations of the Qur'anic text remain undisturbed, and the new translation accommodates as many of them as practicable. We have tried not to impose on our reader a particular interpretation where several interpretations were equally possible. However, where the translation could not accommodate more than one connotation, we have followed the one adopted by the majority of the classic commentators including Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī on whose translation the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is based.

Despite all these sincere efforts, one cannot avoid the admission that the exact translation of the Holy Qur'ān is impossible. One cannot convey the glory and the beauty of the divine expression in any other language, let alone the English language which, despite its vast vocabulary, seems to be miserable when it comes to the expression of spiritual concepts. Therefore, even after observing all the precautions at our command, we feel that we were trying to translate a text which is - as Arberry has rightly put it - totally untranslatable.

However, this is another humble effort to convey the basic message of the Holy Qur'ān to a common reader in a simple manner. How far we have succeeded in this effort? Allah knows best.

The Scheme of the Translation

Now, here are some points to be kept in mind while consulting the translation.

1. Although the translators have tried their best to preserve not only the literal sense of the Holy text, but also the order of words and sentences, yet, while translating the idiomatic expressions, it is

sometimes felt that the literal translation may distort the actual sense or reduce the emphasis embodied in the Arabic text. At such places effort has been made to render the Quranic sense into a closer English expression.

2. Both in the translation of the Holy Qur'ān and in the commentary, a uniform scheme of transliteration has been adopted. The scheme is summarized in the beginning pages of the book.

3. The names of the prophets have been transliterated according to their Arabic pronunciation, and not according to their biblical form. For example, the biblical Moses has been transliterated as Mūsā عليه السلام, which is the correct Arabic pronunciation. Similarly, instead of biblical Abraham, the Qur'ānic Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and instead of Joseph, the Qur'ānic Yūsuf عليه السلام has been preferred.

However, in the names other than those of prophets, like Pharaoh, their English form has been retained.

4. A permanent feature of the original Urdu Ma'ariful-Qur'an is its "*Khulasa-e-Tafseer*" (Summary). Under every group of verses, the esteemed author has given a brief summary of the meaning of the verses to help understand them in one glimpse. This summary was taken from Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, the famous commentary of Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī رحمة الله عليه. He has set up this summary by adding some explanatory words or sentences within brackets to his Urdu translation. The esteemed author of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān has reproduced this summary (after simplification in some places) with the heading of-Khulasa-e-Tafsīr خلاصه تفسير before his own commentary to the relevant group of verses.

While translating Ma'ariful-Qur'an into English, it was very difficult, rather almost impossible, to give that summary in the same fashion. Therefore, the translators have restricted themselves to the commentary of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān and have not translated the Khulasa-e-Tafsir خلاصه تفسير. However, where they found some additional points in the summary which are not expressly mentioned in the commentary, they have merged those points into the main commentary, so that the English reader may not be deprived of them.

It is only by the grace of Allah Almighty that in this way we could be able to present this first volume of this huge work. The second

volume is already under composing, and we hope that Allah سبحانه و تعالى will give us *tawfiq* to bring the next volumes as soon as possible.

Acknowledgments are due to all those who contributed their efforts, advices and financial support to this work. Those deserving special reference are Prof. Abdul-Wahid Siddiqi, Dr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Mr. Abubakr Varachia and Mr. Shu'aib 'Umar (both of South Africa) Dr. Muhammad Ismail (of U.S.A), and Mr. Altaf Barkhurdaria.

My elder brother Mr. Muhammad Wali Raazi has been associated with the work right from its beginning, and has always been a great source of guidance, support and encouragement. He is a member of the committee set up for the translation of the Holy Qur'ān and his remarkable contribution, not only to the translation of the Holy Qur'ān, but also to the translation of the commentary is unforgettable. He, too, has been contributing his valuable time and effort to this project for years just for the sake of Allah. May Allah approve his contributions with His pleasure and bless him with the best of rewards both here and hereinafter.

As for Prof. Muhammad Shameem, the original translator of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān after the demise of Prof. Muhammad Hasan 'Askari, all the formal words of acknowledgment seem to be miserably deficient for the valuable service he has rendered to this project. He has not only translated the book with precaution and love, but also devoted his whole life to the Holy Qur'ān and spared no effort to bring this volume into light. Out of his commitment to the cause, he did not restrict himself to the work of a translator, but also undertook the function of an editor and a proof reader and supervised all other minute details of the publishing process. His devotion, sincerity and hardwork is beyond any amount of admiration. May Allah grant him the best reward of His absolute approval for his noble work. *Amin*.

With these few words I am honoured to present this first volume to the readers. May Allah approve this effort and make it beneficial to the *Ummah*. *'Amin*.

Muhammad Taqi Usmāni
Darul-Uloom, Karachi-14
10 Safar 1416
9 July 1995

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- hā	h
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاى -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- sād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- dād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- tā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- zā	ẓ
ع	عين -- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	كاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	همزه -- Hamzah	’
ى	ياء -- yā	y

Short Vowels

ـَ	: Fatḥah	a
ـِ	: Kasrah	i
ـُ	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ى	: Maddah Yā	ī
	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay
او اوْ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمدلله وكفى وسلام على عباده الذين اصطفى

PREFACE

This is an introduction comprising of some basic informations about the Holy Qur'ān its revelation, the history of its descention and preservation and similar other subjects. This introduction was written by me on the direction of my father, the esteemed author of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān. He wanted to write this introduction himself, but due his many other involvements and his deteriorating health, he could not do so. At this stage he directed me to write on these subject. When I started writing the introduction, it became a lengthy volume itself and it was not proper to include it in the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān as an introduction. Therefore, the book was published separately under the title of "Uloom-ul-Qur'ān" and I condensed its discussions to the present introduction, which was published in the beginning of the second edition of 'Ma'āriful-Qur'ān'.

This introduction is translated into English by Prof. Muhammad Shameem after he accomplished the translation of the first volume of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān. My book "Uloom-ul-Qur'ān" is now available in English also. Those who like detailed discussions on these subjects may refer to it.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmāni
11 Safar 1416 A.H.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمدلله وكفى وسلام على عباده الذين اصطفى

Waḥy and its true nature

Since the Holy Qur'ān was revealed to our beloved prophet Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم by means of *Wahy* (revelation), an understanding of some particulars about *Waḥy* is imperative at the very outset.

The need for *Waḥy*

Every Muslim knows that Allah Almighty has sent man into this world as a matter of test, and in return for his being obligated with certain duties, the whole universe has been placed at his service. For this reason man, once he is in the world, must do two things:

1. He should make the best use of this world, and of things created in it.
2. While using this world to his advantage, he should keep the injunctions of Allah Almighty in sight and do nothing that goes against His will and pleasure.

For these two functions man needs knowledge. Therefore, unless he knows the reality of this world, the properties of different things and the manner in which they can be put to use, he cannot use anything in this world to his advantage. Likewise, unless and until he knows the will of Allah Almighty as to what pleases Him and what displeases Him, it will be impossible for him to lead a life in line with the will of Allah Almighty.

So Allah Almighty, along with the creation of man, has created three things through which he could continue receiving knowledge of the above-mentioned matters of concern. These are:

1. Man's senses, that is, the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, the hands and the feet.
2. The reason.
3. The *Waḥy*.

Consequently, man finds out many things through his senses, many others through reason, and the knowledge of things he cannot get through these two sources are bestowed upon him through *Waḥy*.

The arrangement between these three sources of knowledge is such that each one has its limits, and a particular sphere of activity beyond which it does not work. In natural sequence, the knowledge of things man collects through his senses cannot be deduced through bland reason. For instance, you know by seeing a wall with your eyes that its colour is white. But, should you close your eyes and try to find out the colour of that wall on the sole strength of your reason, this will then be impossible. Similarly, the knowledge of things that comes through reason cannot be discovered by senses alone. For instance, you cannot find out as to who made that wall by simply seeing it with your eyes or touching it with your hands. Not at all, you rather need reason to arrive at that conclusion.

In short, reason gives no guidance as far as the five senses work efficiently, and when the five senses become helpless, reason starts functioning. But, even the guidance given by this reason is not unlimited. This too stops at a certain limit. Then there are things the knowledge of which can neither be acquired through senses nor through reason. For instance, to find out about this very wall, as to what manner of its use will please Allah Almighty and what manner of its use will displease Him, is possible neither through senses nor through reason. In order to give man the answer to such questions, the source that Allah Almighty has prescribed is what is known as *Waḥy*. And the method it follows is that Allah Almighty selects one of His servants, ordains him as His messenger and to him He reveals His Word. This Word is *Waḥy*.

This makes it clear that *Wahy* is the highest source of knowledge for man which offers to him the answer to questions about his life which cannot be solved by means of reason and senses, but, he still

has to have that knowledge. This further explains that reason and perception alone are not enough to show man the way. It is rather all the more necessary, almost inevitable, that the Divine *Waḥy* be there for his guidance. Since *Waḥy* is basically needed where reason does not work, it is, therefore, not necessary that everything communicated through *Waḥy* be compulsively comprehended through reason. On the contrary, as reason is no help in finding out the colour of some object since that is the job of the senses, so is the knowledge of many religious beliefs, the gracious giving of which is the sole prerogative of *Waḥy* and not of reason. Furthermore, trusting reason alone for their comprehension is not sound and correct.

To begin with, it is totally senseless to discuss the issue of *Waḥy* with a person who, God forbid, does not accept the very existence of God. But, for a person who believes in the existence of Allah Almighty and has faith in His perfect power, it is not at all difficult to understand that *Waḥy* is a rational need, that it is possible and that it is there for real. If you have faith in the fact that this universe has been created by an absolutely powerful entity, He is the One who has sent man down here to accomplish some particular mission, how then is it possible to imagine that He, after once having created man, would leave him off in total darkness, without ever telling him why did he come into this world, what his duties were, where was he destined to go and how could he realize the purpose of his life? How could a person, whose sanity is still there, send one of his servants on a certain trip under a designated mission without ever telling him the purpose of the trip while he is leaving, nor explaining it to him later on through some message as to why he has been sent out there and what duties he is supposed to carry out during the trip? When a man of ordinary reason cannot do something like this, how can something like this be imagined with respect to the most Holy Lord of the Universe under Whose ultimate wisdom this whole system of the universe is functioning? After all, how is it possible that the Being, that did create such a mind-boggling system composed of the moon, the sun, the sky, the earth, the stars and the planets, would remain unable to institute some arrangement of communication with His servants, through which human beings could be given guidance about the purpose of their lives? If there is *'Īmān* or faith in the ultimate wisdom of Allah

Almighty, then admitting that He did not forsake His servants in the dark, will become all the more necessary; rather on the contrary, He has surely instituted some regular system for their guidance. And so, this very regular system of guidance is known as *Waḥy* (Revelation) and *Risālah* (Prophethood).

This makes it crystal clear that *Waḥy* is not only a religious belief but also a rational need the rejection of which amounts to a rejection of the ultimate wisdom of Allah Almighty.

The Modes of Descent

This sacred sequence of *Waḥy* (revelation) and *Risālah* (prophethood) came to an end with the last of the prophets, Muḥammad al-Mustafā صلى الله عليه وسلم . Nevermore, shall *Waḥy* descend upon any man, nor there is need for it. *Waḥy* used to come to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in several forms and modes. In a *hadīth* from Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that Sayyidnā Hārith ibn Hishām رضى الله عنه once asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as to how did *Wahy* come to him. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that 'there are times when I hear something like the chiming of bells and this mode of *Waḥy* is the hardest on me. After that, when this chime-sequence ends, that which has been said by the sound seems to have been committed to my memory. And there are times when the angel appears before me in the shape of a man.' (Sahīh al-Bukhārī, 2/1)

As regards the likening of the sound of *Waḥy* to the sound of bells in the *hadīth* cited above, Shaykh Muhyy al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī has explained it by saying that, in the first place, the sound of *Waḥy* is continuous like the sound of a bell which does not break off in between; and in the second place, when the bell rings continuously, it generally becomes difficult for the listener to determine the direction of its sound because its sound seems to be coming from all directions. And the Divine Word too carries with it the distinction that it has no one single direction, in fact, the sound gives the impression of being heard from all directions. A correct realization of this phenomenon is just not possible without auditory experience, however, in order to bring this happening closer to common comprehension, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has simply likened it to the sound of bells. (Fayd al-Bari, 19,20/1)

With the descent of *Wahy* in this mode, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came under very heavy strain. Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضی الله عنها says towards the end of this very *hadith* that she had seen the coming of *Wahy* to him during days of extreme winter. When the progression of *Wahy* ceased, his blessed forehead would have already become dripping-wet inspite of the chilly weather. In yet another narration, Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضی الله عنها relates: When *Wahy* came to him, his breath would seem to stop, the radiant face would change -- turning pale like the branch of a date palm, the front teeth would shiver from cold and he would perspire so much that its drops would roll like pearls. (Al-Itqan, 1/46)

On occasions, so much intensity would be generated in this state of *Wahy* that the animal he would be riding at that time would sit down, wilting under his weight. Once, when he was resting his blessed head on the lap of Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضی الله عنه there started the descent of *Wahy* in that very posture. This released so much weight on Sayyidnā Zayd's thigh that it seemed to break. (Zad al-Ma'ad, 1/18,19)

There were times when a low-volumed sound of this *Wahy* was sensed by others as well. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه says: When *Wahy* came to him, a sound somewhat similar to the buzzing of honey-bees could be heard close to his most bright face. (Tabwib Musnad Ahmad, Kitab al-Sirah al-Nabaviyah, 20/212)

Under the second mode of *Wahy*, an angel would come to him in some human form and deliver Allah's message. Generally, on such occasions, Sayyidnā Jibrā'il علیه السلام used to come to him in the form of Sayyidnā Dihyah al-Kalbi رضی الله عنه . Certainly, at other times, he has come in other forms as well. In any case, this mode of the coming of *Wahy* when it was brought by Sayyidnā Jibrā'il علیه السلام appearing in human form, was the easiest on the Holy Prophet ﷺ . (Al-Itqan, 1/46)

The third mode of the coming of *Wahy* used to be that Sayyidnā Jibrā'il علیه السلام would appear as he was, without having taken on the shape of a man. But this has happened only thrice in his entire life-time. First of all, it was when the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم had himself wished to see him in his real form and shape. The second time, it was in the Mi'rāj (the Ascent to Heaven), and the third time it was at Ajyād in Makkah al-Mukarramah during the very early days of

prophethood. The first two happenings stand proved authentically, however, the last one suffers from weak chains of authority and is, therefore, doubtful. (Fath al-Bari, 1/18,19)

The fourth mode is distinguished by a direct, non-intermediary, two-way conversation with Allah Almighty. This honour was bestowed upon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only once, that is, in Mi'rāj, while awake. In addition to that, once it was in a dream as well that he was in a conversing situation with Allah Almighty.

Under the fifth mode of *Waḥy*, it so happened that Sayyidnā Jibrā'il عليه السلام would, without appearing physically in any form whatsoever, let some words of the message fall into his heart. This is technically known as نفث في الروع (*nafth fī al-rau'*: blowing into the heart) (Ibid).

The Chronology of the Revelation of the Qur'ān

The noble Qur'ān is, in fact, the Divine Word. It is, therefore, secure in the Preserved Tablet. The noble Qur'ān says: بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ (Rather, it is the glorious Qur'an in the Preserved Tablet). (85:21-22)

Then, from the Preserved Tablet, its descention took place twice. Once, the whole of it had been sent to *al-Bayt al-'Izzah*, the most exalted House on the firmament of the world. The most exalted House (also known as *al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr*) is a House facing Ka'bah that exists in the firmament as the place of worship for angels. This descention took place on the Night of *Qadr* (rendered as the Night of Power in English). The second time it used to be revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gradually as needed, having reached its completion in twenty three years. These two modalities of the Qur'anic revelations become clear through the style of the noble Qur'ān itself. In addition to that, al-Nasā'i, al-Baihaqī and al-Hākim and others have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه what can be summed up by saying that the first descention of the noble Qur'ān to the firmament of the world took place all at one time and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was blessed with the second descention gradually. (al-Itqan, v. 1, p. 41)

Explaining the wisdom behind the first descention of the noble

Qur'ān on the firmament facing the world, Imam Abu Shamah has said that it aimed at demonstrating the exalted majesty of the noble Qur'ān, and at the same time, it was to tell the angels that this was the last Book of Allah which is ready for descention for the guidance of the people of the earth.

Shaykh al-Zurqānī makes yet another point when he says that this two-timed descention also aimed at stressing that this Book is beyond all doubts, and it stands preserved at two more places other than the blessed heart of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , that is, in the Preserved Tablet, and in the Exalted House. (Manahil al-'Irfan, v.1, p. 39).

It is almost agreed by all the scholars that the second gradual descention which was on the heart of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم began when his age was forty years. The beginning of this descention, as authentically reported, was in the Night of *Qadr*, and this was the date on which, some years later, the event of the Battle of Badr came to pass. However, nothing definite can be said about the exact date of Ramaḍān when this Night fell. There are some reports which identify that of the seventeenth Rāmaḍan, while others place it on the nineteenth, and still others which indicate the Night of the twenty-seventh. (Tafsir Ibn Jarir v. 10, p. 7)

The verses that came first

It is authentically said that the first verses to come to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were the verses from which Sūrah al-'Alaq begins. As in Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها while relating its background has said that the very first beginning of revelations to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم actually was through true dreams. Following that, came his zeal to worship in seclusion. During this period, he would spend night after night in the Cave of Ḥira' and stay in the state of *I'tikāf* devoted to his *'ibādah* (worship) when one day, right there in that cave, there came an angel from Allah Almighty and the very first thing he said was إقْرَأ (*Iqra'*: 'Read'). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: مَا أنَا بِقَارِئٍ :' I am unable to read.' After that, relating the event himself, he said that 'the angel, hearing this answer of mine, caught hold of me and embraced me with such force that I had to go through unbearable strain.' Then he released me and said: إقْرَأ:'Read'. I said: 'I am unable to read.' Thereupon, he seized me the third time,

gave a hard embrace and then released me. After that he said:

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ ۝ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۝ اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ
الَّذِیْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۝ عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَالَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۝

Recite with the Name of your Lord who created, created Man out of a blood-clot. Recite and Your Lord is Most Generous who taught by the Pen, taught Man what he did not know. (96:1-3)

These were the first verses to be revealed to him. Thereafter, the coming of *Waḥy* stayed discontinued for three years. This period is known as the period of *fatrah*, that is, the period when *Waḥy* was discontinued for a short interval of time. Then, it was after three years that the same angel who had visited him in the Cave of Hirā' became visible to him between the heaven and the earth. He read to him the verses of Sūrah al-Muddaththir. Thereafter, the sequence of *Waḥy* was reactivated.

The Makki and Madani Verses

While looking at the titles of the Surahs of the Holy Qur'ān, you may have noticed the entry, *Makkī* (or Meccan, Makkan, *Makkiyyah*) with some Surāhs, and *Madanī* (Medinan, Medinite, *Madaniyyah*) with some others. It is necessary to understand correctly what it means. In the terminology of the commentators, the '*Makkī 'āyah*' means a verse that was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم earlier than he actually reached Madīnah by way of *hijrah* (emigration). Similarly, the '*Madanī 'āyah*' or the *Madanī* verse means that it was revealed after he migrated to Madinah. Some people take '*Makkī*' to mean that the verse concerned was revealed in the city of Makkah, and so the '*Madanī*' is supposed to have been revealed in Madīnah. This view is not correct because there are several verses which were not revealed in the city of Makkah, yet are called *Makkī* because they had already been revealed before *hijrah*. As such, the verses that were revealed in Minā, 'Arāfat, or during the Journey of Ascent (*Mi'rāj*) are also called *Makkī*. So much so, that the verses revealed during the journey of *hijrah* enroute Madīnah are also called *Makkī*. Similarly, there are several verses which were not revealed in the city of Madīnah, but they are *Madanī*. For example, there were several journeys that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to undertake while

going many hundred miles away from Madīnah, and the verses revealed at all those places are called *Madanī* anyway. So much so that the particular verses that were revealed on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah or the military campaign of Hudaybīyyah in the city of Makkah proper or its environrons are also called *Madanī*. Accordingly, the Qur'ānic verse:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْاَمَانَاتِ اِلٰى أَهْلِهَا

> Surely, Allah commands you to fulfil trust obligations towards those entitled to them. (4:58)

is *Madanī* although it was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah. (al-Burhan, v. 1, p. 88, and Manahil al-'Irfan, v. 1, p. 88)

Then there are Sūrahs which are either totally *Makkī*, or totally *Madanī*. For instance, Sūrah al-Muddaththir is wholly *Makkī* and Sūrah 'Al-'Imran is wholly *Madanī*. But, on occasions, it has so happened that one or some *Madani* verses find a place in the Sūrah which is wholly *Makkī*. On other occasions, it has happened just the reverse. For instance, Sūrah al-A'raf is *Makkī*, but in it the verses from وَاسْأَلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِى كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ to وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِى آدَمَ are *Madanī*. Similarly, Sūrah al-Ḥajj is Madanī but four of its verses, that is, those from وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ وَّلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنّٰى to عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَقِيْمٍ are *Makkī*.

This also makes it clear that the incidence of a Sūrah being *Makkī* or *Madanī* is generally conditioned by the nature of the majority of its verses and so it happened frequently that the initial verses of a Sūrah which were revealed before *Hijrah* were regarded as *Makkī*, although some of its verses may have been revealed later on following *Hijrah*. (Manahil al-'Irfan, v. 1, p. 192)

Characteristics of *Makkī* and *Madanī* Verses

The scholars of *Tafsir*, after having made a thorough investigation into the *Makkī* and *Madanī* Surahs, have come up with a set of characteristics that tell right off if a Sūrah is *Makkī* or *Madanī*. Some of these characteristics are recognized as universal rules while others hold good most of the time. The universal rules are as follows:

1. Every Sūrah in which the word كَلَّا (never) appears is *Makkī*. This word has been used 33 times in 15 Sūrahs, and all these verses are in the last half of the noble Qur'ān.

2. Every Sūrah in which (according to the Hanafiyyah) there appears a verse of *Sajdah* is *Makkī*.
3. Every Sūrah, with the exception of Sūrah al-Baqarah, in which the story of Ādam and Iblīs finds mention is *Makkī*.
4. Every Sūrah in which a permission of *jihād* or a description of its injunctions has been given is *Madanī*.
5. Every verse which mentions the hypocrites is *Madanī*.

The following characteristics are general and mostly frequent, that is, sometimes the contrary may happen, but usually and mostly it follows the said pattern:

1. In *Makkī* Sūrahs, generally, the form of address used is يَآ اَيُّهَا النَّاسُ (O people), and in *Madanī* Surahs it is يَآ أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا (O believers).
2. The *Makkī 'Ayat* (Verses) and Sūrahs are generally short and brief while the *Madanī* verses and chapters are long and detailed.
3. The *Makkī* Sūrahs mostly consist of subjects such as, Oneness of Allah, Prophethood, affirmation of the Hereafter, the panorama of the Resurrection, words of comfort for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and events relating to the past communities, and in these, the number of injunctions and laws taken up is much less as compared with the *Madanī* Surahs where family and social laws, injunctions of *jihād* and expositions of limits and duties appear frequently.
4. In *Makkī* Sūrahs, most of the confrontation is against idolaters while in *Madanī* Sūrahs it is against the people of the Book and the hypocrites.
5. The style of *Makkī* Sūrahs is more majestic. It has profusion of metaphors, similies and allegories, and the vocabulary used is extensive. Contrary to this, the style of the *Madani* Sūrahs is comparatively simple.

This difference in the style of *Makkī* and *Madanī* Surahs initially owes its origin to a variety of conditions, circumstances and addressees. Muslims had to deal mostly with the idolaters of Arabia during their Makkan life. No Islamic state was born yet. Therefore,

during this period, more emphasis was laid on the correction of beliefs, reform of morals, logical refutation of the idolaters and the miraculous nature of the noble Qur'ān. Contrary to this, an Islamic state had risen in the Holy city of Madinah. People were rushing into the fold of Islam, group after group. Idolatery stood refuted intellectually. The ideological confrontation was now wholly against the people of the Book. Therefore, greater attention was paid to education in injunctions, laws, limits and duties, and on the refutation of the people of the Book. The style adopted matched these objectives.

The Gradual Revelation of the Noble Qur'ān

As said earlier, the noble Qur'ān was not revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم suddenly and simultaneously. On the contrary, it was revealed, little by little, over a span of nearly twenty three years. At times, Jibrā'īl عليه السلام would come with a small verse, or even with some unit of a verse. Then, there were times when several verses would be revealed at one time. The smallest portion of the Qur'ān which was revealed as such is غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ (al-Nisā': 4:94) which forms part of a long verse. On the other hand, the whole of Sūrah al-An'ām was revealed at one time. (Ibn Kathir, v. 2, p. 122)

Rather than being revealed all at once, why was the Qur'ān revealed little by little? The polytheists of Arabia had themselves put this question to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Allah Almighty has taken it upon Himself to answer the question in the following words:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً كَذٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا

> The disbelievers said, "Why has the Qur'ān not been sent down upon him all at once?" "(We did) like this, so that We may strengthen your heart thereby, and We have recited it very distinctly. They bring not to thee any similitude but that We bring thee the truth, and better in exposition" (25:32-33)

It is sufficient to understand a gist of the wisdom behind the gradual revelation of the Holy Qur'ān as stated by Imam al-Rāzī in his explanation of this verse. He says:

1. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was *ummiyy*, that is, being unlettered, he did not read or write. So, had the entire Qur'ān been

revealed at one time, it would have been difficult to remember and document. Contrary to this, Sayyidnā Musā عليه السلام knew reading and writing, therefore, the Torah was revealed to him at one single time.

2. If the entire Qur'ān had been revealed all at once, immediate compliance of all its injunctions would have become obligatory, and this would have gone against the wise graduation which has featured as a matter of concern in the Sharī'ah of our Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

3. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had to go through ever-new tortures inflicted by his people. That Jibrā'il عليه السلام came, again and again, with the words of the noble Qur'an, made his stand against these tortures bearable, and gave strength to his heart.

4. A large portion of the Qur'ān is devoted to answers given to people who posed questions, while some other portion refers to various particular events. Therefore, the revelation of those verses was appropriate at the time when those questions were asked, or those events came to pass. This increased the insight of Muslims and when the Qur'ān unfolded that which was unseen, its truth became all the more manifest. (al-Tafsir al-Kabir, v. 6, p. 336)

***Sabab al-nuzul*: (Cause of revelation)**

The verses of the noble Qur'ān are of two kinds. In the first place, there are the verses that Allah Almighty revealed on His own. Their revelation was not caused by some particular event or a question asked by someone. In the second place, there are those verses which were revealed in answer to some question or with reference to some event. This could be termed as the background of these verses. This background is known, in the terminology of the commentators, as the '*sabab*' of *nuzūl* ('cause' of revelation) or the '*shā'n*' of *nuzūl* (the 'background' of revelation). For instance, take the verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

لَاتَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكٰتِ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنَّ وَلَاَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ

Do not marry female associators unless they come to believe, and a Muslim slave girl is better than a female associator, even though she is liked by you. (2:221)

This verse was revealed in the wake of a particular event. During

the days of Ignorance, Sayyidnā Marthad ibn Abī Marthad al-Ghanavī رضی اللہ عنہ had a relationship with a woman, named 'Anaq. After embracing Islam, he migrated to Madīnah while that woman stayed behind in Makkah al-Mukarramah. There was an occasion when Sayyidnā Marthad visited Makkah al-Mukarramah on a certain business. 'Anaq came to him with an invitation to sin. Sayyidnā Marthad refused flatly and said: 'Now Islam has come between me and you, but should you so wish, I can marry you after clearing it with the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.' After returning to Madīnah, Sayyidnā Marthad sought his permission to marry the woman he said he liked. Thereupon, this verse was revealed, and it prohibited marriage with *mushrik* women. (Asbab al-Nuzul by al-Wahidi, p. 38)

This event is the '*shā'n*' or '*sabab*' of *nuzūl* ('cause' or 'background' of revelation) behind the verse mentioned above. The background of revelation is, therefore, very important in the exegesis of the noble Qur'ān. There are many verses the meaning of which cannot be correctly understood unless the circumstances underlying their revelation become known.

The Seven Readings of the Holy Qur'ān

In order that the noble Qur'an becomes easily recitable, Allah Almighty has blessed the Muslim community with special convenience by allowing it to read the words of the Qur'ān in more than one way. If there are situations when a person is unable to pronounce some words in one manner, he could recite it in another. It appears in a *ḥadīth* of Sahīh Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was once sitting by the pond of Banu Ghifar while Angel Jibrā'īl came and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to ask your community to recite the Qur'ān following one method of reading.' He said: 'I seek from Allah His pardon and forgiveness. My people do not have the ability to do so.' Then, Angel Jibrā'īl returned to him and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to let your people recite the Qur'ān following two readings.' He said: 'I seek pardon and forgiveness from Allah Almighty. My people do not have the ability to do even that.' Then, Jibrā'īl came the third time and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to let your people recite the Qur'ān following three readings.' Again he said: 'I seek pardon and forgiveness from Allah Almighty. My

people do not have the ability to do even that.' Then he came the fourth time and said: 'Allah Almighty has commanded you to let your people recite the Qur'ān following seven readings. So, whichever of these they follow to read the Qur'ān, their recitation will be correct.' (Manahil al-'Irfan, v. 1, p. 33)

Accordingly, there is yet another *ḥadīth* where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

إِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ اُنْزِلَ عَلٰى سَبْعَةِ اَحْرُفٍ فَاقْرَءُوْا مَاتَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ

This Qur'an has been revealed covering seven versions. So from out of these, recite in a way that is easy on you.

What is meant by 'Seven Versions' in this saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ? There are several scholarly positions in this connection but according to scholars who have conducted painstaking and exhaustive research on the subject, the weightier meaning of this expression is that the variations found in different readings of the Holy Qur'ān are of seven types. These are as follows:

1. The difference in nouns: This includes the difference concerning singular, dual, plural, as well as, masculine and feminine. For instance, in one reading it is تَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ, while in another, تَمَّتْ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّكَ.

2. The difference in verbs: That there be past in one reading, the present in another and the imperative in yet another. For instance, it is رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ اَسْفَارِنَا in one reading, while رَبَّنَا بَعِّدْ بَيْنَ اَسْفَارِنَا in another.

3. The difference in the placement of diacritical marks: That which shows variance in *I'rāb*, which reflects variance in grammatical mode of a word and is demonstrated through desinential inflections, such as *kasrah*, *fatḥah*, *ḍammah*. For instance, reading لَايُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ as لَا يُضَارُّ كَاتِبٌ and ذُوالْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيْدُ as ذُوالْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيْدِ.

4. The difference caused by addition and deletion of words: That there be some word missing in one reading while it has been added on in another; for instance, the words تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ appear in one reading while the words تَجْرِىْ تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ appear in another.

5. The difference of precedence and succession: That there is a word which precedes in one reading, while it succeeds in the other.

For instance وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ and وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْحَقِّ بِالْمَوْتِ.

6. The difference caused by transposition: This happens when a word found in one reading is replaced by another word in another reading. For instance, نُنْشِزُهَا and نَنْشُرُهَا, also فَتَبَيَّنُوْا and فَتَثَبَّتُوْا, and طَلْحٍ and طَلْعٍ.

7. The difference caused by manners of reading: It includes variations in *tafkhīm* (velarization, making sound heavy), *tarqīq* (making a letter sound soft), *imālah* (inclination, bending the sound of a short vowel), *madd* (prolongation), *qasr* (to shorten), *hamz*: *hamza*tation (providing a letter with *hamzah*), *iẓhār* (clear pronunciation) and *idghām* (assimilation). It means that, by doing these, the actual word does not change but the mode of its pronunciation does change. For instance, the word, مُوسٰى is rendered as مُوْسَيْ in one of the readings.

Anyhow, many readings were revealed incorporating these seven types of different renderings. This difference between them really made no difference in meaning. The latitude so given was aimed at making recitation easy.

In the beginning, people were not totally used to the style of the Qur'ān, therefore, many readings were permitted within the radius of these seven types. But, it was the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that he would go through the entire revealed Qur'ān with Jibrā'īl علیہ السلام during the month of Ramaḍān every year. The year he left this mortal world, that was the year he did so twice. This '*daur*' or meticulous re-reading of the Qur'ān is called العرضة الأخيرة (last review). On this occasion, many readings were abrogated. Only readings retained were the ones which continue to stay preserved to this day with uninterrupted succession.

Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ, during the period of his *khilafah*, arranged to have seven copies of the noble Qur'ān prepared in order to remove misgivings regarding the recitation of Qur'ān. He incorporated all readings in these seven copies by leaving the calligraphed verses of the noble Qur'ān without dots and desinences (the vowel-points) so that the text could be read in accordance with whichever reading one wished to follow from among the very readings cited. Thus most of the

readings merged into this script, and the readings that could not merge into the script were saved by him when he elected to have one copy written according to one reading, and another, in accordance with another reading. The community demonstrated such care and diligence in having the fondly-remembered readings collected in these copies that *Qirā'ah* developed into a branch of knowledge in its own right, and there rose hundreds of scholars, reciters and memorizers of the Holy Qur'ān who spent their entire spans of life to keep it preserved and protected.

What actually happened was that when Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ sent the seven copies of the noble Qur'ān to various areas, he had also sent particular reciters who could teach how to recite them. So, when these revered reciters reached their designated areas, they taught people to read the Qur'ān in accordance with their respective readings. These different readings spread out among people. At this stage, some people bequeathed their lives to memorize different readings, and in training others to continue the discipline. This is how the foundation of the 'science of readings' was laid and people from different parts of the Islamic world started turning to the masters of the discipline to achieve the highest of excellence in it. Some memorized only one reading, others did two or three or seven, or even more than that. In this connection, a standard rule was accepted as norm throughout the *ummah* and it was invariably followed everywhere. It stipulated that only such reading (*qirā'ah*) will be accepted as being the Qur'ān which fulfils three conditions:

1. There is room for it in the script of 'Uthmani' copies of the Qur'ān.
2. It conforms to the grammar of the Arabic language.
3. It should have, provenly -- with sound authority, originated from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , and be well-known among the masters of readings, that is, the Imāms of Qirā'ah.

A reading which lacks even one of these three requirements cannot be considered as part of the Qur'ān. Thus a large number of readings continued to be reported in uninterrupted succession. Then, as a matter of convenience, it so happened that an Imām started giving

instructions in one, or some selected readings, and that particular reading became identified with his name. Then, scholars started writing books to collect these readings. So, Imam Abu 'Ubayd Qāsim ibn Sallām, Imām Abū Ḥātim Sijistānī, Qāḍī Ismā'īl and Imām Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī were the first among those who compiled books in this field which included more than twenty readings. Then came the great scholar, Abū Bakr ibn Mujāhid (died 324 Hijrah) who wrote a book in which he had included readings from seven *qārīs* (reciters) only. This book of his became so popular that these readings from the seven *qaris* became much more famous as compared with those of other *qaris*. In fact, some people got used to thinking that these are the only sound readings coming in uninterrupted succession. Although, the truth of the matter is that 'Allāmah ibn Mujāhid has collected these seven readings in one place just by chance. He never meant that readings other than these were wrong or unacceptable. This act of 'Allāmah ibn Mujāhid created yet another misunderstanding when some people began to think that سبعة احرف (seven versions) means just these seven readings which have been collected by ibn Mujāhid. Although, it has been explained earlier that these seven readings are simply a part of sound readings, otherwise every reading that fulfils the above-mentioned three conditions perfectly is sound, acceptable and included within the seven versions (*Hurūf*) in which the noble Qur'ān was revealed.

The Seven *Qārīs*

Anyhow, the seven *qārīs* who became most famous as a result of this act of 'Allāmah ibn Mujāhid are:

1. 'Abdullah ibn Kathīr al-Dārī (died 120 Hijrah). He was fortunate enough to have seen Sayyidnā Anas ibn Mālik, 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and Abu Ayyūb al-Ansārī رضی اللہ عنہم from among the Companions. His reading became more famous in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Well-known among those who transmitted his rendition are Bazzī and Qambal, may Allah have mercy on them all.

2. Nafi' ibn 'Abd Al-Rahmān ibn Abī al-Nu'aym (died 169 Hijrah). He had the benefit of learning from seventy successors to the Companions who were direct disciples of Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہم . His reading became more famous in Madīnah and among those who transmitted

his rendition, Abū Mūsā Qālūn (died 220 Hijrah) and Abu Sā'id Warsh (died 197 Hijrah) are better known.

3. 'Abdullāh al-Hisbī, better known as Ibn 'Āmir (died 118 Hijrah). He was fortunate to have seen Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr and Wāthilah ibn Asqā' رضی اللہ عنہم from among the Companions. He had learnt the art of Qur'ānic reading from Mughīrah ibn Shihāb al-Makhzūmī who was a disciple of Sayyidnā 'Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ . His reading gained currency mostly in Syria, and more famous among those who transmitted his rendition are Hishām and Dhakwān.

4. Abū 'Amr Zabbān ibn al-'Alā (died 154 Hijrah). He has reported his rendition from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہم through *Mujāhid* and Sa'id ibn Jubayr. His reading became fairly well-known in Basrah. Abū 'Umar al-Dawrī (died 246 Hijrah) and Abū Shu'ayb al-Sūsī (died 261 Hijrah) are among the more famous transmitters of his rendition.

5. Hamzah ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt, ex-slave of 'Ikramah ibn Rabī' al-Taymī (died 188 Hijrah). He is a disciple of Sulayman al-A'mash, who was a disciple of Yahyā ibn Waththāb, who was a disciple of Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh, and he had the benefit of learning from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān, 'Alī and 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہم . Among his transmitters, Khalf ibn Hishām (died 188 Hijrah) and Khallād ibn Khālid (died 220 Hijrah) are more famous.

6. 'Āṣim ibn Abī al-Najūd al-Asadiyy (died 127 Hijrah). Through Zirr ibn Hubaysh, he is a disciple of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہم and through Abū 'Abd al-Rahman Sulamī and al-Asadīyy, he is a disciple of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہم . More famous among the transmitters of his rendition are Shu'bah ibn 'Ayyāsh (died 193 Hijrah) and Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān (died 180 Hijrah). Generally, the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān these days is made following the rendition of this very Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān.

7. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ḥamzah al-Kisā'ī (died 189 Hijrah). Among his transmitters, Abū al-Ḥarith Marwāzī (died 240 Hijrah) and Abū 'Umar al-Dawrī (who is also a transmitter of Abū 'Amr) are better known. The readings of the later three became more common in Kūfah.

As it has been submitted earlier that several other readings, other than these seven, are sound and have been reported in uninterrupted succession. However, when the misunderstanding that sound readings are limited to these seven started gaining currency, several scholars (for example, 'Allāmah Shadhā'ī and Abū Bakr ibn Mihrān) collected, instead of seven, ten readings in one book. Thereupon, the term, "*Al-qirā'āt al-'ashrah*" or "Ten Readings" became famous. In these ten readings, the readings by the following three were also included in addition to those of the seven mentioned above:

1. Ya'qūb ibn Isḥāq al-Ḥaḍramī (died 205 Hijrah). His rendition was famous mostly in Baṣrah.
2. Khalf ibn Hishām (died 205 Hijrah) who is also a transmitter of the rendition of Hamzah. His rendition was common mostly in Kūfah.
3. Abū Ja'far Yazīd ibn al-Qa'qā' (died 130 Hijrah). His rendition found wider currency in Madīnah al-Tayyibah.
4. Abū al-Faraj Shambūdhī (died 388 Hijrah) who was a resident of Baghdād.

Some scholars have counted Sulaymān al-A'mash among the fourteen *qārīs* in place of Shambūdhī. Out of these, the first ten readings are credited with uninterrupted succession as vouched by sound authority.

Other than these are *Shādhdh* or rare (Manahil al'Irfan with reference to Munjid al-Muqri'in by ibn al-Jazri).

The Preservation of the Holy Qur'ān

In the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Since the noble Qur'ān was not revealed all at once, on the contrary, different verses from it used to have been revealed as and when appropriate, therefore, it was not possible from the very beginning to write and preserve it in a book form. So, during the initial stage of Islam, major emphasis was laid on memory as a means of preserving the noble Qur'ān. When *Waḥy* used to come in the very beginning, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would tend to repeat its words instantly so that they would be memorized well enough. Thereupon, Allah Almighty directed him through the verses of Sūrah al-Qiyāmah

that he need not repeat words in a hurry immediately as *Wahy* came. Allah Almighty would Himself endow him with a memory that he will be unable to forget the words of the *Waḥy* once its descention has been completed. So it was that the moment the Qur'ānic verses would come to him, they would be committed to his memory the next moment. Thus the blessed chest of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was the most protected vault of the noble Qur'ān, in which there was no chance of even some common mistake, editing or alteration. Moreover, as a matter of additional precaution, he used to recite the Qur'ān before angel Jibrā'il عليه السلام every year during the month of Ramaḍān; and the year he left this mortal world he completed a cumulative review of Qur'ānic recitation (*daur*) twice with Jibrā'il عليه السلام (Sahih al-Bukhari with Fath al-Bari, p. 36, v. 9).

Again, as it was, he would not restrict his teaching of the Companions to just the meanings of the noble Qur'ān, but had them memorize its words as well. Then, the revered Companions were themselves so enamoured with the desire to learn and remember the noble Qur'ān that everyone of them was anxious to get ahead of the other. There were women who claimed no *mahr* (dower) from their husband except that they would teach the Qur'ān.

Hundreds of Companions, freeing themselves from all other concerns, had devoted their whole lives for this purpose. Not only did they memorize the Qur'ān but also went on repeating it within their nightly prayers. When someone migrated from Makkah al-Mukarramah and came to Madīnah al-Tayyibah, says Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would entrust him to one of us Ansars so that he could teach Qur'ān to the newcomer. The Mosque of the Prophet was so filled with voices generated by learners and teachers of the Qur'ān that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to ask them to lower their voices so that mistakes are not made (Manahil al-'Irfan, 1/234).

So, within a fairly short time, there was on hand a large group of the noble Companions who had the glorious Qur'ān all committed flawlessly to their memory. Included in this group were, in addition to the Four Guided Caliphs, persons like Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah, Sayyidnā Sa'd, Ṣayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd, Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān, Sayyidnā Sālim Mowla abī Ḥudhayfah, Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās,

Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ṣā'ib, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Sayyidah Ḥafṣah, Sayyidah Umm Salmāh, may peace be upon them all.

In short, memorization of the Qur'ān was given more emphasis in early Islam as this was the only protected and trust-worthy method given the conditions of that time. The reason is that the number of people who could read or write was very limited in those days. The means of publishing books, such as the printing press, etc., were not there. Therefore, in that situation, if writing was taken to be sufficient, it would have neither been possible to spread out the Qur'an on an extensive scale nor to protect it reliably. In its place, Allah Almighty had blessed the people of Arabia with a memory of such dimensions that thousands of poetic lines would normally rest in the memory of one person after another. Ordinary, run-of-the-mill villagers would remember by heart their genealogies and those of their families, and unbelievably enough - even those of their horses! Therefore, this power of memory was well utilized for the conservation and protection of the noble Qur'ān and it was through it that the verses and chapters of the noble Qur'ān reached all over into the far corners of Arabia.

The writing of *Wahy*

Besides having the Qur'ān committed to memory, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made special arrangements to have the Qur'ān committed to writing as well. Sayyidna Zayd ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه says: 'I used to write down the words of *Waḥy* for him. When *Wahy* came to him he felt burning with heat and the drops of perspiration would start rolling down on his body like pearls. When this state would go away from him, I would present myself before him with a shoulder-bone or a piece (of something else). He would go on dictating and I would go on writing. When I would be finished with writing, the sheer weight of copying the Qur'ān would give me the feeling that my leg is going to break and I would never be able to walk. In any case, when I would be finished with writing, he would say: 'Read'. I would read it back to him. If there was a shortcoming, he would have it corrected and then let it be known to people (Majma' al-Zawaid with reference to Tabrani 1/156).

Besides Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضی اللہ عنہ , there were many other Companions who carried out the duty of committing the *Wahy* to writing. Some of those who can be specially mentioned, in addition to the Four Guided Caliphs, are Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Sayyidnā Zubayr ibn 'Awwām, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Sayyidnā Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah, Sayyidnā Khālid ibn al-Walid, Sayyidnā Thābit ibn al-Qays, Sayyidnā Abān ibn Sa'īd and others (Fath al-Bari, 9/18)

Sayyidnā 'Uthman says that it was the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that he, soon after the revelation of a certain portion of the Qur'ān, would pointedly instruct the scribe of the *Waḥy* to write it in such Sūrah after such and such verse (for details see Fath al-Bari, 9/18 and Zad al-Ma'ad 1/30).

Since paper was not available in Arabia during those days, therefore, these Qur'ānic verses were mostly written on stone slabs, parchments, date branches, bamboo units, tree leaves and animal bones. However, at times, paper pieces have also been used (Ibid., 9/11).

Thus, there existed, during the times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , a copy of the noble Qur'ān which he had arranged to be committed to writing under his supervision. Although, it was not there as a formally prepared book, but it certainly was there in the form of various units of available writing materials. Along with it, it was also the practice of some revered Companions that they would make copies of the Qur'anic verses and keep them for personal recollection. This practice was common since the very early period of Islam. Accordingly, much before Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ embraced Islam, his sister and brother-in-law had in their possession verses of the Qur'ān which they had written and kept in book form (Sirah ibn Hisham).

Preservation: In the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ

However, it was characteristic of all copies of the noble Qur'ān made during the days of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that they were either written on different available writing surfaces, for instance, a verse would appear on parchment, another on tree leaf and yet another on a bone; or they were not complete copies. One Companion would have only a single Sūrah in his record while someone else would have five or ten Sūrahs and some others will have only a few verses. Then there were Companions having in their possession explanatory sentences as well along with the text of the verses.

On these grounds, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, during his tenure of Khilafah, thought it necessary to bring together all these scattered units of the Qur'ān and thus have them preserved. The motives and the methods behind this great achievement of his have been explained in detail by Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضی اللہ عنہ when he says: "One day, soon after the battle of Yamamah, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr sent a message calling me in. When I reached him, Sayyidnā 'Umar was present there. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said to me: 'Umar has come just now and he tells me that a large group of *Ḥuffāẓ* (those who had committed the Qur'ān to memory) have met their death as martyrs in the battle of Yamāmah. If the *Ḥuffāẓ* of the noble Qur'ān continue to meet their *shahadah* (martyrdom) in this manner, I am afraid a large portion of the Qur'ān may just go extinct. So, in my view, you should begin the task of having the Qur'ān collected together under your order'. I said to 'Umar: 'How can we do what the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself did not do?' 'Umar replied: 'By God, this is for nothing but good.' After that, this is what 'Umar continued telling me, until I too started seeing the truth, and now, my view was the same as 'Umar's'. After that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr told me: 'You are young, and intelligent. We have no doubts about you. You have been working as a scribe of *Waḥy* as well under the supervision of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, so you search and collect the verses of the noble Qur'ān'."

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit says: "By God, had these blessed people commanded me to haul some mountain, that would have been much less weightier than this duty of collecting the Qur'ān. I said to them: 'How are you doing something that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم did not do?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said: 'By God, this is good, nothing but good.' After that, this is what Sayyidnā Abū Bakr kept saying to me again and again until Allah Almighty put my heart at rest for the same view that was the view of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Consequently, I started searching for the Verses of the Qur'ān and it was from the branches of date palms, slabs of stones and hearts of people that I finally collected the noble Qur'ān." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an)

At this point while we are dealing with the process of the collection of the Qur'ān, we should have a clear perception of the method used by

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضی اللہ عنہ . As mentioned earlier, he was himself a *Ḥafiẓ* of the Qur'ān, therefore, he could have written down the whole Qur'ān from his memory. In addition to that, there were hundreds of *Ḥuffāẓ* (memorizers of the Qur'ān: plural of *Ḥafiẓ*) present at that time; the noble Qur'ān could have still been written down by entrusting the duty to a selected group from out of them.

Also, the copies of the noble Qur'ān committed to writing during the times of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم could have been used by Sayyidnā Zayd to make his copy of the Qur'ān. But he, guided by his caution and concern, did not limit himself to any one of the many methods available. On the contrary, by using all these methods simultaneously, he did not allow any verse to be included in his master copy of the Qur'ān unless he received written and verbal testimonies proving its uninterrupted succession. In addition to that, the verses that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had arranged to be written under his supervision, were still preserved by the Companions. Sayyidnā Zayd collected them together so that the new copy be made from them. Consequently, a public proclamation was made to the effect that anyone possessing any number of written verses of the noble Qur'ān should bring them over to Sayyidnā Zayd. When a written verse was brought to him by someone, he used to verify its authenticity by the following four methods:

(1) To begin with, he tested its reliability against his own memory.

(2) Then, Sayyidnā 'Umar too was a *Ḥafiẓ* of Qur'ān, and as proved by reliable reports, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ had assigned him too to work with Sayyidnā Zayd on this project. When someone came with some verse, Sayyidnā Zayd and Sayyidnā 'Umar used to receive it jointly (Fath al-Bari with reference to ibn Abi Dawud).

(3) No written verse was accepted until such time that two trustworthy witnesses had testified to the fact that the particular verse was written in the presence of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. (al-Itqan, 1/10)

(4) After that, these verses in writing were collated with collections that different Companions had prepared for themselves (al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, by Zarkashi, 1/238).

If this functional methodology behind the collection of the Qur'ān

during the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه is kept in mind, it would become perfectly simple to understand what Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thabit meant when he said: "I found the last verses of Sūrah al-Barā'ah beginning with: لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ with Sayyidnā Abū Khudhaymah رضى الله عنه only. They were not found with anyone else except him."

This never means that no person other than Sayyidnā Abū Khudhaymah رضى الله عنه remembered these verses, or somebody else did not have these in the written form, or anyone other than him did not know of their being part of the Qur'ān. On the contrary, it means that these verses were not found with anyone from among those who were coming along with different verses written as dicated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Otherwise, as far as the fact of these verses being part of the Qur'ān is concerned, everyone knew it in an uninterrupted succession. There were hundreds of Companions who remembered it as well. Moreover, these were available in writing with Companions who possessed complete collections of the Qur'ānic verses. But, among those written separately under the supervision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ this verse was found only with Sayyidnā Abū Khudhaymah رضى الله عنه and not with anyone else (al-Burhan, 1/234-45).

So, in every way possible, it was with great caution and concern that Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه, by collecting the Qur'ānic verses, wrote them out in an organized form on pages of paper (al-Itqan, 1/60).

But, each Surah was written in separate folios, therefore, this copy was composed of many folios. In the terminology of Qur'ānic Studies, this copy is called the "*Umm*" (literally, 'the mother', meaning 'the original') and it had the following features:

1. In this copy, the Qur'ānic verses were indeed arranged in accordance with the order identified by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, but the Sūrahs were not so arranged, rather they were written separately (Ibid).

2. Incorporated in this copy were all seven *Hurūf* (versions) of the Qur'ān (which have been explained earlier). (Manhil al'Irfan, 1/246 and Tarikh al-Qur'an by al-Kurdi, p. 28)

3. Collected here were all verses the recitation of which has not been abrogated.

4. The purpose of having this copy made in writing was to prepare an organized document with the collective endorsement of the whole *ummah*, so that, reference can be made to it when needed.

These folios committed to writing on the orders of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه remained with him during his life-time. Then, they remained with Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه . After the martyrdom of Sayyidnā 'Umar, they were transferred to the custody of Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضى الله عنها . After the death of Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضى الله عنها , Mārwan ibn al-Ḥakam had these burnt since the copies of Qur'ān ordered by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه were ready at that time, and a consensus of the *ummah* had already been reached to the effect that following these copies of the Qur'ān, in script and arrangement of Sūrahs, was obligatory. Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam thought it inadvisable to let any copy which was contrary to this script and arrangement remain in existence (Fath al-Bari, 9/16).

Preservation: In the period of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه

When Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه became Khalīfah, Islam had grown out of Arabia reaching into the far-flung areas of Byzantium and Iran. As people from new areas embraced Islam, they would learn the noble Qur'ān from the Mujāhidin of Islam or from the traders because of whom they had found the blessing of Islam. On the other side, you have already read that the noble Qur'ān was revealed incorporating seven versions with various readings, and different *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) had learnt it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in accordance with different readings, therefore, every Companion taught Qur'an to his disciples in accordance with that particular reading which they had themselves learnt from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . In this manner, this difference in readings reached far-out countries. Until such time that people knew that the noble Qur'an has been revealed incorporating seven *Ḥurūf* (versions) no harm was done by this difference. However, when this difference reached those far-out countries, and the fact that the noble Qur'an has been revealed incorporating different readings was not fully publicised there, disputes among people started showing up. Some people began to insist on their reading as correct and that of others as incorrect. On

the one hand, these disputes posed the danger that people would fall into the grave error of declaring the readings of the noble Qur'ān which have followed in uninterrupted succession as incorrect. On the other hand, there was no such standard copy available throughout the Islamic world which could become the rallying authority for the entire *ummah*, except, of course, the copy committed to writing by Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه which was there in Madīnah. Since other copies were written individually, and in them, there was no provision to incorporate all the readings, therefore, the only reliable method to resolve these disputes was that copies which incorporate all valid readings be spread out all over the Islamic world, and then, by seeing them it could be decided as to which reading is correct and which, incorrect. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه accomplished this very remarkable feat during the period of his *Khilāfah*.

Details of this feat, as given in *ḥadīth* narrations, inform us that Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ibn Yamān رضى الله عنه was engaged in *jihād* on the Armenian-Azerbaijan front. There he noticed that differences were rising among people about readings of the noble Qur'ān. So, on his return to Madīnah, he went straight to Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه and once there, he pleaded: '*Yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn*! Before this *Ummah* falls a prey to differences in the Book of Allah like the Jews and Christians, you should do something about it.' Sayyidnā 'Uthmān asked: 'What is the matter?' In reply, Sayyidna Hudhayfah said: 'I was on a *jihād* mission fighting on the Armenian front. There I saw people of Syria following the reading of Ubayy ibn Ka'b which would not be familiar to the people of 'Iraq, and the people of Irān follow the reading of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd which would not be familiar to the people of Syria. As a result of this, they are charging each other of being *kāfirs*.'

In fact, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه had himself sensed the danger much earlier. He was told that there were cases right there in Madīnah al-Tayyibah itself where a teacher of the noble Qur'ān would teach the text to his disciples in accordance with one reading, and another teacher would do so in accordance with another reading. In this way, when the disciples of different teachers came together, differences would crop up between them, and there were occasions when this difference would extend to teachers, and they too, would declare each other's reading to be incorrect. When Sayyidnā

Hudhayfah ibn Yamān رضى الله عنه too invited his attention to this danger, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه convened a meeting of some highly-regarded Companions and sought their advice. He said: 'I have been informed that there are people who say to each other things like - "my reading is better than yours" - and this could touch the extreme limits of *kufr*. So, what is your opinion in this connection?' The Companions themselves asked Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه :'What are your own thoughts on this subject?' Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه said: 'I believe we should unite everyone on one Book so that we face no difference or division.' The Companions, approving of this opinion, supported Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه .

Consequently, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه gathered people together and delivered a sermon and in it he said: "You who live so close to me in Madīnah, if you can falsify each other and differ with each other in respect of the readings of the noble Qur'ān, it is quite obvious that those who are far away from me will be indulging in falsification and disputation on a much larger scale. Therefore, let everyone get together and come up with a copy of the Qur'ān following which becomes obligatory for all."

With this in view, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه sent a message to Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضى الله عنها requesting her to let them have the blessed folios of the Qur'ānic text (prepared under the orders of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه which she had in her custody). He promised that these will be returned to her after copies have been made. Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضى الله عنها sent these pages of the Qur'ān to Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه. He then formed a group of four Companions which was composed of Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Thābit, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ and Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Hārith ibn Hishām رضى الله عنهم اجمعين . This group was entrusted with the duty of making several copies from the original copy of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr's Qur'ānic folios and making sure that Sūrahs too are arranged in order. Out of these four Companions, Sayyidnā Zayd was an Ansāri, while the rest of the three were Qurayshis. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه said to them: 'When you and Zayd differ in respect of any portion of the Qur'ān (that is, differ as to how a certain letter should be written) you write it in the language of the Quraysh because the noble Qur'an has been revealed in their very language."

Basically, this duty was entrusted to only four distinguished persons named above, but later on, other Companions were also attached to help them out. (Fath al-Bari, pp. 13-15, v. 9)

They performed the following functions in connection with the writing of the Qur'ān:

1. In the copy prepared during the period of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه , Sūrahs were not placed in sequence, rather each Sūrah was written separately. They wrote down all Sūrahs in their proper sequence in a single copy. (Mustadrak, 2/229)

2. The verses of the noble Qur'ān were written in a way so that all readings backed by uninterrupted succession could be incorporated within their script. Therefore, no dots or desinential marks were placed on them so that the text could be recited in accordance with all readings that are supported by uninterrupted succession. For instance, they wrote ننسرها in order that it could be read both نُنْشِزُهَا and نَنْشُرُهَا, because both readings are correct. (Manahil al-'Irfan, 1/253-254)

3. Upto this time, there existed only one single copy of the noble Qur'ān - complete, authentically standard and collectively attested by the whole *ummah*. These distinguished persons prepared more than one copy of this newly organized *Muṣhaf* (copy of the Qur'ān).

It is generally believed that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی الله عنه had accomplished the preparation of five copies, but Abū Hātim Sijistānī says that a total of seven copies were prepared. Out of these one was sent to Makkah al-Mukarramah, one to Syria, one to Yamān, one to Bahrain, one to Baṣrah and one to Kūfah, and one was preserved in Madīnah al-Tayyibah.

4. To accomplish the task cited above, these revered elders basically worked through the pages of the Qur'ān which were written during the times of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه . But, along with it, as a matter of added precaution, they adopted exactly the same method that was employed during the times of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه . Consequently, assorted copies of texts committed into writing during the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which were preserved by different Companions were recalled once again, and it was, by yet another collation with these, that the new copies were prepared. This time, a separately written verse of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْهِ was

found with Sayyidnā Thābit al-Anṣārī رضی اللہ عنہ only. As we have explained earlier, it does not mean that nobody else remembered this verse because Sayyidnā Zayd رضی اللہ عنہ has himself said: 'While writing the copy of the Qur'ān, I could not find the particular verse of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb which I used to hear the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recite.' This shows very clearly that the verse under reference was something Sayyidnā Zayd and other Companions remembered very well. On the other hand, it also does not mean that this verse never existed in writing anywhere, because this verse was obviously there in the pages of the Qur'ān written during the times of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ. Besides that, obviously enough, this verse was also included in the copies of the noble Qur'ān which were written and preserved by the Companions on their own. But, like it was in the days of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, this time too, all those scattered documents, available with the Companions in writing, were collected together, therefore, Sayyidnā Zayd رضی اللہ عنہ and others with him did not write down any verse into these copies of the Qur'ān until such time when they did find it in those written documentations as well. As such, the fact was that other verses were found written separately too with several Companions, but this verse from Sūrah al-Aḥzāb was not found written separately with anyone else except Sayyidnā Khudhaymah رضی اللہ عنہ.

5. After having these several standard copies of the Qur'ān prepared, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ had all copies personally kept by different Companions burnt so that all copies of the Qur'ān become uniform in terms of the script, incorporation of accepted readings and the order of chapters, leaving no room for any difference between them.

The entire *ummah* acknowledged this achievement of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ with admiration, and the Companions supported him in this venture. The only exception is that of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ who was somewhat unhappy about it, something that cannot be taken up here in its proper perspective. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ says:

"Say nothing about 'Uthmān unless it be in his favour because, by God, whatever he did in connection with copies of the Qur'ān was done in the presence of all of us, and with our advice and counsel." (Fath al-Bari, 9/15)

Steps Taken to Facilitate Recitation

After the afore-mentioned achievement of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ, the *ummah* reached a consensus on the rule that it is not permissible to write the text of the noble Qur'ān using any method other than the 'Uthmāni Script. Consequently, all copies of the Qur'ān were, later on, written in accordance with this method, and the Companions and their successors, may Allah be pleased with them all, by bringing forth repeatedly, reproductions of the standard 'Uthmāni copies of the Qur'ān, helped spread the noble Qur'ān on a vast scale.

But, the copies of the noble Qur'ān were still devoid of dots and vowel points or desinential marks which made it difficult for non-Arabs to recite them freely. As Islam spread out wide and deep in non-Arab countries, the need to add dots and vowel points became acute, in order that people may be able to recite them easily. Several steps were taken to achieve this purpose. Their brief history is as follows:

Inclusion of Dots

The practice of placing dots over or under letters was just not there among early Arabs, however, the readers were so used to this style that they had practically no difficulty in reading dot-less writing to the limit that they would easily distinguish between doubtful letters by referring to the context. Specially, there was no possibility of any doubt in the case of the noble Qur'ān because its preservation did not rest on writing, rather on the strength of memories, pursuant to which, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضی اللہ عنہ had assigned *Qāris*, accomplished reciters of the Qur'ān, along with its copies sent out to various parts of the Muslim world so that they could teach how to read it.

There are different reports as to who first placed dots on the copy of the noble Qur'ān. Some reports say that this feat was first accomplished by Ḥaḍrat Abū al-Aswad al-Du'ali رحمۃ اللہ علیہ (al-Burhan, 1/250). Some say he did this under the instructions of Sayyidnā 'Alī کرم اللہ وجہہ (Subh al-A'sha, 3/155). There are others who have said that Ziyād ibn Abī Sufyān, the Governor of Kufah, asked him to do this. Then there is yet another report which credits Hajjaj ibn Yūsuf with this feat who did it with the help of Ḥasan al-Basrī, Yaḥya ibn Ya'mur and Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim al-Laythī, may Allah's mercy be upon them all. (Tafsir al-Qurtubi, 1/63)

Marks for correct reading

In the beginning, like dots, the Qur'ān did not have any desinential marks either. Here too, reports are at variance as to who placed desinential marks first. Some say Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī did it first while others claim that this was accomplished by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf through Yaḥyā ibn Ya'mur and Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim al-Laythī. (Ibid)

Keeping in view all reports in this connection, it appears that desinential marks were first invented by Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī, but they were not like what they are today. Instead, placed there for *fathah* was a dot (_•_) over the letter, for *kasrah* a dot (____) under the letter, for *ḍammah* a dot (_____•) in front of the letter; and there were two dots (_••_ or ____ or _••_) for *tanwīn* or nunnation. It was only later that Khalīl ibn Ahmad innovated the signs of *hamzah* (glottal stop) and *tashdīd* (doubling). (Subh al-A'sha, 3/160-161) After that, Hajjāj ibn Yusuf requested Yaḥyā ibn Ya'mur, Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim al-Laythī and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may Allah's mercy be upon them all, to simultaneously place dots and desinential marks on the text of the noble Qur'ān. On this occasion, the present forms of desinential marks were chosen to replace dots as expression of case signs. The purpose was to avoid confusing them with dots intrinsically belonging to letters.

Aḥzāb or *Manazil*

It was the practice of Companions and their Successors that they would complete the recital of the entire Qur'ān once every week. For this purpose, they had identified fixed portions for their daily recitation which is known as '*ḥizb*' or '*manzil*'. Thus the entire Qur'ān was divided over seven '*aḥzāb*' (plural of '*ḥizb*') '*manāzil*' (plural of '*manzil*'). (al-Burhan, 1/250)

Ajzā' or Parts

Today, the Qur'ān is divided over thirty '*ajz'ā*' (plural of '*juz*') or parts. This division in parts has nothing to do with the meaning of the Qur'ān. In fact, this division in thirty equal parts has been made to serve as teaching aid for children as, it will be noticed, there are places where the designated part ends with an unfinished statement. It is difficult to say with certainty as to who brought about this division of

the Qur'ān in thirty parts. Some people believe that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضى الله عنه had arranged to have these written in thirty different folio-units while their copies were being made, therefore, this division dates back to his time for sure. But, this humble writer was unable to find any proof of this position in the writings of earlier scholars. However, 'Allāmah Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī has written that the thirty parts of the Qur'ān have been known all along and they customarily appear in copies of the Qur'ān used in schools. (al-Burhan, 1/250; Manahil al-'Irfan, 1/402)

Akhmās and *A'shār*: The sets of Fives and Tens

Another sign used in Qur'ānic copies of early centuries was that they would write the word, *khams* (خمس : five) or its abbreviation (خ) after every five verses (on the margin); and the word, *'Ashr* (عشر : ten) or its abbreviation (ع) after every ten verses. The former kind of signs were called '*Akhmās*' (a pentad or group of five) and the later, '*A'shār*' (a decade or group of ten). Consequent to another difference among early scholars, these signs were considered permissible by some, and reprehensible or *makrūh* by others. Saying, with any degree of certainty, as to who was the first to place the signs, is difficult indeed. According to one view, Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf was its inventor, while another view credits this to an order of 'Abbasi Khalīfah, al-Ma'mūn (al-Burhan, 1/251). But, these two views do not appear to be sound since the idea of *a'shār* seems to be there during the times of the Companions. For example, *Masrūq*' a well-known *Tabi'ī*, says that with Sayyidnā 'Abdūllāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه the placement of '*A'shār*' markings in the copy of the Qur'ān was *makrūh*. (Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah, 2/497).

Rukū' or Section

Moreover, the signs of *Akhmās* and *A'shār* were abandoned later on but, yet another sign which continues on even to this day is the sign of *rukū'* or section. This has been determined in terms of the contents of the noble Qur'ān whereby a sign of *rukū'* (the letter ع on the margin) is placed at the conclusion of a statement. Inspite of his efforts, this humble writer was unable to locate anything authentic which would tell us as to who originated the *rukū'*, and in what period. However, this much is almost certain that the purpose of this sign is to identify an average portion of verses which could be recited in one *raka'ah*. It is called '*rukū'*' so that *rukū'* (bending position) could be made in *ṣalāh*

after reaching this point. There are 540 *rukū'āt* in the whole Qur'ān. So, by reciting one *rukū'* in every *raka'ah* of *tarāwih*, it is possible to complete the recital of the entire Qur'ān on the night of the twenty seventh (Fatawa 'Alamgiryah, Fasl al-Tarawih, 1/94).

Rumūz al-Awqāf: Stop Signs

Another useful step taken to facilitate recitation and phonetically correct pronunciation (*tilāwah* and *tajwīd*) was to provide signs with Qur'ānic sentences which could tell the nature of making a stop (breathing) there. These signs are known as the '*rumūz*' (signs) or '*alāmāt* (symbols) of *awqāf* (stops). Their purpose is to help a person who does not know Arabic to stop at the correct spot during his recitation, and thus, avoid causing a change in meaning by breaking his breath at the wrong spot. Most of these signs were first invented by 'Allamāh Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Tayfūr Sajāwandī, may Allah's mercy be upon him (Al-Nashr fi al-Qira'at al-'Ashr, 1/225). Details about these signs are given below:

ط : This letter ***Tā'*** is an abbreviated form of *al-waqf al-mutlaq*. It means that the statement stands completed at this point. Therefore, it is better to stop here.

ج : This letter ***Jīm*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-jā'iz* and it means that it is permissible to stop here.

ز : This letter ***Zā'*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-mujawwaz*. It means that making a stop here is correct all right, but the better choice is not to make a stop here.

ص : This letter ***Ṣād*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-murakhkhaṣ*. It means that the statement has not yet been completed at this point but, because the sentence has become long, here is the place to breathe and stop rather than do it elsewhere (al-Mianh al-Fikriyyah, p. 63).

م : This letter ***mīm*** is an abbreviation of *al-waqf al-lāzim*. It means if a stop is not made here an outrageous distortion in the meaning of the verse is possible. So, it is better to stop here. Some phoneticians of the Qur'ān have also called this *al-waqf al-wājib* or the obligatory stop. But this is not '*wājib*' of *fiqh* which brings sin if abandoned. In fact, the purpose is to stress that making a stop here is the most preferable of all stops (al-Nashr, 1/231).

لا : This letter ***lā*** is an abbreviation of *lā taqif*. It means 'do not

stop here,' but it does not imply that making a stop here is impermissible, because there are certain places bearing this sign where making a stop brings no harm and making an initiation from the following word is also permissible. Therefore, the correct meaning of this sign is: If a stop is made here, it is better to go back and read over again. Initiation from the next word is not approved (al-Nashr, 1/233).

As far as the origin of these signs is concerned, it stands proved beyond doubt that they were invented by 'Allamāh Sajāwandī. In addition to these, there are some other signs as well that appear in the copies of the Qur'ān, for instance:

مع : This ***ma'*** is an abbreviation of "*mu'ānaqah*". This symbol is inserted at a place where a single verse has two possible explanations. According to one explanation, the stop will be made at one given place, while according to another explanation, this will be at another place. So, a stop can be made at either one of the two places, but once a stop has been made at one place, it is not correct to stop at the other. For instance, take the verse ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِى التَّوْرٰىةِ ۛ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِى الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۛ كَزَرْعٍ اَخْرَجَ شَطْـَٔهٗ . If a stop is made here at التوراة , then it is not correct to stop at الانجيل and should a stop be made at الانجيل , then it is not correct to stop at التوراة . However, if a stop is not made at both places, that will be correct. It is also known as '*al-muqābalah*'. It was, first of all, pointed out by Imām Abū al-Faḍl al-Rāzī (al-Nashr, 1/237 and al-Itqan, 1/88).

سكتة : This is a symbol for ***saktah***. It means one should stop here breaking the sound but not the breath. This is generally inserted at a place where assimilated reading is likely to cause an erroneous projection of meaning.

وقفة : At this sign of ***waqfah***, one must stop a little longer than *saktah* (pause). But, breath should not break here too.

ق : This letter ***qāf*** is an abbreviation of *qīla 'alaihi l'waqf*. It means that some phoneticans of the Qur'ān identify a stop here while others do not.

قف : This word is '***qif*** which means 'stop' and it is inserted where the reader may possibly think that a stop was not correct there.

صلى : This is an abbreviation of ***al-waṣlu awlā*** which means 'it is better to recite in assimilated continuity'.

صلى : This is an abbreviation of ***qad yuṣalū***, that is, some stop here, while others like to recite on in assimilated continuity.

وقف النّبىّ صلى الله عليه وسلم : This is marked at places where some *ḥadīth* report proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stopped here while reciting.

The printing of the Holy Qur'ān

Before the advent of the printing press, all copies of the Qur'ān were calligraphed by hand, and for this purpose, there always has been, in every age, a large group of calligraphers whose sole purpose in life was nothing else except the calligraphy of the Qur'ān. The amount of hard work put in by Muslims in writing the words of the Qur'ān in ever better styles, and the way they demonstrated their intense emotional involvement with this great Book has a long and interesting history of its own which would need a regular book. This is not the appropriate place to go in such details.

With the invention of the printing press, the noble Qur'ān was first printed at Hamburg in 1113 Hijrah, a copy of which is still present in Dār al-Kutub al-Misrīyyah. After that, several orientalists arranged the publication of the copies of Qur'an but they were not received with much approval in the Muslim world. After that, Mawlay 'Uthmān was the first person among Muslims who had one manuscript of the Qur'ān printed at St. Petersburg, a Russian city, in 1787 A.D. Similarly, another manuscript was printed in Qazān also. In 1828 A.D., the Qur'ān was printed by lithography on stone slabs in the Iranian city of Tehran. After that, printed copies of the Qur'ān became common throughout the world. (Tarikh al-Qur'ān by al-Kurdi, p. 186, and 'Ulum al-Qur'ān by Dr. Subhi Saleh; Urdu Translation by Ghulam Ahmad Hariri, p. 142)

An introduction to the science of *Tafsīr*

Now we can turn to the requisites of *'Ilm al-Tafsīr* or Exegesis. The literal meaning of '*tafsīr*' in the Arabic language is 'to open' or to explain, interpret or comment. Technically, the science of *tafsīr* is a branch of knowledge in which the meanings of the Qur'ān are explained and its injunctions and wisdoms are described openly and clearly (al-Burhan). Addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Glorious Qur'ān says:

وَاَنۡزَلۡنَا اِلَيۡكَ الذِّكۡرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ

We revealed the Qur'ān to you so that you explain to the people what has been sent down to them(16:44).

Once again, the Qur'ān says:

لَقَدۡ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ اِذۡ بَعَثَ فِيۡهِمۡ رَسُوۡلًا مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ يَتۡلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِمۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيۡهِمۡ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ وَالۡحِكۡمَةَ

Surely, Allah did a great favour to Muslims when He sent a Messenger to them from among them who would recite His verses before them and purify them and teach them the Book and the Wisdom (3:164).

Keeping this in view, it should be noted that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not only teach the words of the Qur'ān, but he also explained these in details. This is why, on some occasions, the revered Companions had to devote years together in learning a single Sūrah; details will, *inshallāh*, appear later on.

Until such time that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced this mortal world with his presence, seeking the explanation of any verse was not much of a problem. When the Companions faced any difficulty, they would turn to him and get a satisfying answer. But, later on after him, it became necessary that the *tafsīr* of Qur'ān be preserved as a permanent branch of knowledge so that, along with the words of the noble Qur'ān, its correct meaning as well stands protected and conserved for the Muslim *ummah*, and heretics and deviationists find no room there for distortion of its meanings. So, with the grace and *tawfīq* of Allah Almighty, this *ummah* accomplished this wonderful mission with such effeciency that today we can say without any fear of doubt or rejection that not only are the words of this last Book of Allah protected but also stands protected even that correct *tafsīr* and explanation which has reached us through the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions who were ever-prepared to sacrifice their lives for him.

In what ways the Muslim *ummah* protected and preserved the *'ilm* (science) of *tafsīr*? What exrteme hardships they faced in this pursuit? How many stages did this struggle had to go through? All this has a long and fascinating history which cannot be taken up in the present

context (for this, please see *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, a detailed work on this subject by this humble writer). The intention here is to state briefly as to what are the sources of Qur'ānic exegesis and how these sources have been utilized in explaining the noble Qur'ān by all those countless books on *'Ilm al-Tafsīr* available in every language. These sources are six in number:

The Sources of *Tafsīr*

1. The Glorious Qur'ān

The first source of the knowledge of *tafsīr* is the Holy Qur'ān itself. Accordingly, it happens very often that a certain point which is brief and requires explanation is invariably clarified by some other verse of the Qur'ān itself. For instance, there appears that sentence of prayer in the Sūrah al-Fātihah: اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ that is, 'Guide us in the straight path - the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace...' Now it is not clear here as to who are those whom Allah Almighty has blessed. But, in another verse, they have been identified very clearly where it is said:

فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ

> So, these are the people whom Allah Almighty has blessed, being the prophets, their true followers, the martyrs (in the way of Allah) and the righteous. (4:69)

Therefore, when respected commentators explain some verse, they first check to see if a *tafsīr* of this verse is already there elsewhere in the noble Qur'ān itself. If it is there, they elect to go by it as their first choice.

2. The *Ḥadīth*

The words and the deeds of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are called *Ḥadīth*, and as it has been stated earlier, Allah Almighty had sent him with the Qur'ān solely for the purpose that he should explain to people, openly and explicitly, the correct meanings of the noble Qur'ān. Consequently, he discharged this duty with grace and excellence both by his words and deeds. In fact his whole blessed life is, after all, a practical *tafsīr* of Qur'ān. It is for this reason that

respected commentators, in order to understand the Qur'ān, have laid the greatest emphasis on *Ḥadīth* as the second source, and it is in the light of *ahadīth* that they have determined the meanings of the Book of Allah. However, because all sorts of narrations - sound, weak, and fabricated - are included in *Ḥadīth*, therefore research-oriented commentators do not accept a narration as trustworthy until it withstands the principles used in the scrutiny of *Ḥadīth* narrations. Hence, finding a *ḥadīth* report somewhere, looking at it, and then employing it to determine a certain *tafsīr* is not correct, because that report could be weak, even contrary to other stronger reports. This is really a very delicate matter, and venturing therein is the exclusive prerogative of those who have spent their years in mastering these fields of knowledge.

3. The Reports from the *Ṣaḥābah*

The noble *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions), may Allah be pleased with them all, had received their education directly from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In addition to that, they were personally present on the scene when *Wahy* came, and they had themselves witnessed all circumstances and backgrounds of the revelation of the Qur'ān. Therefore, naturally, the recorded statements of these blessed souls are far more authentic and trustworthy in explaining the noble Qur'ān; the later people cannot take that place. Hence, in the case of verses the explanation of which is not found in the Qur'ān or *Ḥadīth*, statements recorded from the noble Companions are given the highest priority. Consequently, if there is a consensus of Companions on the explanation of a certain verse, the commentators follow just that, and explaining it in any way, other than that, is not permissible. By the way, if the statements of Companions differ in the interpretation (*tafsīr*) of a certain verse, then the commentators who come later examine them in the light of arguments and determine as to which interpretation or explanation can be given preference. In order to handle this situation, there is an important corpus of rules and regulations already codified under the sciences of *Usūl al-Fiqh, Usūl al-Ḥadīth* and *Usūl al-Tafsīr* a detailed discussion of which is not appropriate here.

4. The Reports from the *Tābi'in* or Successors

After Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) come the Successors (*Tābi'in*). The later are those who have learnt the *tafsīr* of Qur'ān from the

Companions. Therefore, their statements too have great importance in the science of *tafsīr*, although there exists a difference among scholars whether or not the statements of the *tābi'īn* are decisive evidences in *tafsīr* (al-Itqan, 2/179) but their importance is something which cannot be denied.

5. The Arabic Language

Since the noble Qur'ān was revealed in the Arabic language, therefore, in order to explain the Qur'ān, it is necessary to have a complete mastery over the language. There are several verses of the noble Qur'ān in the background of which there happen to be just no attending circumstances of revelations, or any juristic or scholastic question, therefore, in their *tafsīr* or explanation, the sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or the statements of the *ṣaḥābah* and *tābi'īn* are not reported. For that reason, the only means through which these can be explained is that of the Arabic language, and it is on th basis of language alone that they are elucidated. Besides that, should there be some difference in the *tafsīr* of a certain verse, then, in that case too, the science of linguistics is used to run a test of veracity between varying opinions.

6. Deliberation and Deduction

The last source of *tafsīr* consists of deliberation and deduction. The subtleties and mysteries of the noble Qur'ān are an ocean with no shore, no end. Therefore, the more a person, who has been blessed with insight into the Islamic sciences by Allah Almighty, deliberates in it, the more he discovers ever-new mysteries and subtleties. As a result of this, commentators do present the outcomes of their respective deliberations as well, but mysteries and subtleties so described are found acceptable only when they do not go against the five sources mentioned above. So, should a person, while explaining the Qur'ān, come out with a subtle point or independent judgment which is contrary to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, Consensus (*Ijmā'*), Language, or the statements of Companions and Successors, or stands in conflict with another principle of Sharī'ah, that will then have no credence. Some mystics (رحمهم الله) had started describing such mysteries and subtleties in *tafsīr*, but investigative scholars of the *ummah* did not consider these trustworthy because the personal opinion of any

person against the basic principles of the Qur'ān, Sunnah and Sharī'ah has obviously no weight. (al-Itqan, 2/184)

The rules relating to Israelite reports

Judaica or *Isrā'īliyyāt* are narratives which have reached us through Jews and Christians. It may be noted that early commentators used to write down all sorts of narrations which reached them from an identified source. Many of these narrations were straight Judaica. Therefore, it is equally necessary to know what they really are. The reality is that some noble Companions and their Successors first belonged to the religion of the people of the Book, later on when they became Muslims and learnt the Qur'ān, they came across several events relating to past communities in the Qur'ān and which they had also read in the books of their previous religion. Therefore, while referring to the events mentioned in the Qur'ān they would describe other details before Muslims which they had seen in the books of their old religion. These very details have entered into the books of *tafsir* under the name of '*Isrā'īliyyāt*'. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr, who is one of the authentic research scholars, has written that there are three kinds of '*Isrā'īliyyāt*':

1. Narrations the truth of which is proved from other evidences of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, for instance, the drowning of Pharoah and and the ascent of Sayyidnā Mūsā علیه السلام onto Mount *Tūr* (Sinai).

2. Narrations the falsity of which is proved from other evidences of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, for instance, it appears in Judaic narrations that Sayyidnā Sulaymān علیه السلام had become (God forbid) an apostate in his later years. Its refutation is proved from the Qur'ān. It is said there: وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَٰكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا :'It was not Sulaymān who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels' (2:102). To cite yet another example, it finds mention in Judaic narrations that (God forbid) Sayyidnā Dawūd علیه السلام (David) committed adultery with the wife of his general (Uriah), or, having him killed through all sorts of contrivances, ended up marrying his wife. This too is a balatant lie, and taking such narrations to be false is imperative.

3. Narrations regarding which the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the Sharī'ah are silent, such as the injunctions of Torah etc., are subjects about which silence is to be observed as taught by the Holy Prophet ﷺ

:'Neither confirm, nor falsify'. There is, however, a difference of opinion among scholars whether or not reporting such narrations is permissible. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr has given the decisive word by saying that reporting these is permissible all right but doing so is useless because they cannot be taken as authentic. (Muqaddamah Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

A misconception about the *tafsir* of Qur'ān

Hopefully, details given above have made it clear that the *tafsīr* (exegesis or interpretation) of the noble Qur'ān is an extremely delicate and difficult undertaking for which getting to know the Arabic language alone is not enough. In fact, it is necessary to have expertise in all related branches of knowledge. Therefore, scholars say that a *mufassir* or commentator of the Qur'ān must have vast and deep knowledge of the syntax, etymology, rhetoric, and literature of the Arabic language, as well as, that of prophetic Traditions, principles governing jurisprudence and exegesis, doctrinal articles of belief and scholastics. The reason is that one cannot arrive at correct conclusions while explaining the Qur'ān unless there be that adequacy in these fields of knowledge.

It is regretable that a dangerous epidemic has overtaken Muslims lately whereby many people have started taking the sole reading ability of Arabic sufficient for the *tafsīr* (interpretation) of the Qur'an. As a result, anyone who gets to read ordinary Arabic starts passing out opinions in the domain of Qur'ānic exegesis. Rather, it has been noticed on occasions that people having just passable familiarity with the Arabic language, and who have yet to master their Arabic to perfection, take it upon themselves to engage in explaining the Qur'ān following their whims, even going to the limit of finding faults with classical commentators. Bad come to worse, there are some subtle tyrants who would, by simply reading the translation, imagine that they have become scholars of the Qur'ān, not even feeling shy of criticising commentators of great stature.

It should be understood very clearly that this is a highly dangerous pattern of behaviour which, in matters of religion, leads to fatal straying. As regards secular arts and sciences, everyone can claim to understand that should a person simply learn the English language and go on to study books of medical science, he would not be

acknowledged as a physician by any reasonable person anywhere in the world, and certainly not trustworthy enough to take care of somebody's life unless he has been educated and trained in a medical college. Therefore, having learnt English is not all one needs to become a doctor.

Similarly, should anyone knowing English hope to become an engineer just by reading through engineering books, it is clear that no sane person in this world would accept him as an engineer. The reason is that this technical expertise cannot be acquired simply by learning the English language. It would, rather, need a formal training in the discipline under the supervision and guidance of expert teachers. When these stringent requirements are inevitable in order to become a doctor or engineer, how can the learning of Arabic language alone become sufficient in matters relating to the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*? In every department of life, everyone knows and acts upon the principle that every art or science has its own particular method of learning and its own peculiar conditions. Unless these are fulfilled, the learner's opinion in given arts and sciences will not be considered trustworthy. If that is so, how can the Qur'ān and the Sunnah become so unclaimed a field of inquiry that there be no need to acquire any art or science in order to explain them, and anyone who so wishes starts passing out opinions in this matter?

Some people say that the Qur'ān has itself stated that: وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ: 'And surely We have made the Qur'ān easy for the sake of good counsel.' And since the noble Qur'ān is a simple book, its explanation hardly needs much of a support from any art or science. But this argument is terribly fallacious, which is, in itself, based on lack of intellect and plenty of superficiality. The fact is that the verses of the Qur'ān are of two kinds. Firstly, there are the verses that offer general good counsel, relate lesson-oriented events and introduce subjects dealing with taking of warning and acting on sound advice. Examples of this are the mortality of the world, the accounts of Paradise and Hell, the discourses likely to create the fear of God and the concern for the Hereafter, and other very simple realities of life. Verses of this kind are undoubtedly easy and anyone who knows the Arabic language can benefit from their good counsel by understanding them.

It is in relation to teachings of this kind that, in the verse cited above, it was said that 'We have made them easy'. Hence, the word للذكر (for the sake of good counsel) in the verse itself is pointing out towards this meaning.

Contrary to this, the other kind consists of verses which include injunctions, laws, articles of faith and intellectual subjects. Understanding verses of this kind as they should be rightfully understood and deducing and formulating injunctions and rulings from them cannot be done by just any person unless one has the insight and permeating reach into the Islamic areas of knowledge. This is why the noble Companions, whose mother-tongue was Arabic and they did not have to go anywhere to get trained into understanding Arabic, used to spend long periods of time in learning the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . 'Allamāh al-Suyuti has reported from Imām Abū 'Abd al-Raḥman Sulami that the Companions, who formally learned the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم such as Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and others, have told us that, after having learnt ten verses of the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , they would not proceed on to the next verses until such time that they had covered all that was intellectually and practically involved in the light of these verses. They used to say:

فَتَعَلَّمْنَا القُرْآنَ وَالعِلْمَ وَالعَمَلَ جَمِيْعًا

We have learnt the Qur'ān, knowledge and action all in one. (al-Itqan 2/176)

Consequently, as reported in Mu'aṭṭā' of Imām Mālik, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ spent full eight years memorizing Sūrah al-Baqarah alone and, as in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ says that 'one of us who would learn Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah 'āl-'Imrān had his status enormously raised among us.' (Ibid)

Worth noticing is the fact that these noble Companions whose mother-tongue was Arabic, who had the highest degree of expertise in poetry and letters and who would have no difficulty in having very long *qaṣīdah* poems perfectly committed to their memories with the least of effort, why would they need, just to memorize the Qur'ān and

understand its meanings, as long a time as eight years, and that too, for mastering one Sūrah? The only reason for this was that proficiency in the Arabic language was not enough to have a learning of the noble Qur'ān and areas of knowledge bearing on it. In order to do that, it was also necessary to seek the benefit of the teaching and the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Now this is so obvious that the noble Companions inspite of having an expertise in the Arabic language and notwithstanding their being direct witnesses to the revelation, still needed the process of going through formal education at the feet of the blessed master in order to become the *'alims* of the Qur'ān, how then, after all these hundreds of years following the revelation of the Qur'ān, just by cultivating an elementary familiarity with Arabic, or by simply looking at translations, can anyone claim to having become a commentator of the Qur'ān? What a monsterous audacity and what a tragic joke with knowledge and religion! People who opt for such audacity should remember well that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

من قال فی القرآن بغیر علم فلیتبوا مقعده فی النار

Whoever says anything about the Qur'an without knowledge, then he should make his abode in Hell. (Abu Daw'ud, as in al-Itqan, 2/179)

And he has also said:

من تکلم فی القرآن برأیه فأصاب فقد أخطأ

Whoever talks about the Qur'an on the basis of his opinion, and even if says something true in it, still he made a mistake. (Abu Daw'ud, Nasa'i)

Famous Commentaries of the Qur'ān

Countless commentaries of the Glorious Qur'ān have been written since the blessed period of the Prophethood. In fact, no other book of the world has been served as much as the noble Qur'ān. Introducing all these commentaries is not possible even in some detailed book, much less in a brief introduction such as this. But, what we wish to do here is to introduce very briefly the major commentaries that have served as particular sources of Ma'āriful Qur'ān and which have been cited there time and again. Although, during the period the above commentary was being written, many commentaries and hundreds of books were constantly referred to, but here, the purpose is to limit the introduction to commentaries the references to which will appear

repeatedly.

Tafsīr ibn Jarīr

The real name of this *Tafsīr* is Jāmi' al-Bayān and it was compiled by 'Allamāh Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (died 310 Hijrah). 'Allamāh Tabarī is a highly rated commentator, *muḥaddith* (*ḥadīth* expert) and historian. It is said that he kept writing for forty years continuously and used to write forty pages every day (al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, v. 11, p. 145). There are charges of being *Shi'ah* against him, but researchers have refuted this charge and the truth of the matter is that he is a highly regarded scholar of the followers of the Sunnah, rather one of the *Shi'ite* scholars.

Being in thirty volumes, his *Tafsīr* enjoys the status of a basic source for later commentaries. In his explanation of the verses, he quotes different scholars and then goes on to prove the position which, according to him, is weightier, of course, with arguments and proofs. It must, however, be admitted that narrations of all sorts, sound and weak, have found a place in his commentary. Because of this, not every narration presented by him can be relied upon. In reality, he was aiming through his commentary to collect and compile all narrations that could become available to him, so that this collected material could be put to use later on. Conceded is the fact that he has given the chain of reporters along with each narration so that whoever wishes to investigate into the chain of narrators could do so and decide for himself if the narrations are true or false.

Tāfsīr ibn Kathīr

Ḥāfiẓ 'Imād al-dīn Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī al-Shafi'i (died 774 Hijrah), a distinguished research scholar of the eighth century, is the author of this commentary. It has been published in four volumes. Here emphasis has been laid on explanatory narrations. A special feature is his criticism as *ḥadīth* expert on different narrations, and from this point of view, this book holds a distinct place among all books of *Tafsīr*.

Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī

Its full name is Al-Jāmī' li-Ahkām al-Qur'ān. It was written by the famous learned writer and research scholar of Andalusia (Spain), Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Abi Bakr ibn Farah al-Qurṭubī

(died 671 Hijrah). He was a follower of the Māliki school of *fiqh* and was known all over for his *'ibādah* and piety. The fact is that the basic objective of this book was to deduce juristic injunctions and rulings from the Qur'ān yet, while doing so, he has also provided the explanation of verses, research into difficult words, discussion of diacritical marks and elegance of style and composition, and related Traditions and Reports in his *Tafsir*, and quite ably so. This book is in twelve volumes and has been published repeatedly.

Al-Tafsir al-Kabir

This is the work of Imām Fakhr al-din al-Razi (died 606 Hijrah). Its real name is Mafatih al-Ghayb, but is popularly known as 'Tafsir Kabir'. Imām Rāzi is an *imām* of the theology of Islam, therefore, great emphasis has been laid in his *Tafsir* on rational and scholastic debates and on the refutation of false sects. But, the truth is that this *Tafsir* is, in its own way, a unique key to the Qur'ān as well. Furthermore, the pleasing way in which the meanings of the Qur'ān have been clarified and the mutual link of the Qur'ānic verses established, is all too praise-worthy. Most likely, Imām Rāzi himself wrote down his *Tafsir* as far as Sūrah al-Fath. Onwards from there, he could not complete. So, the remaining part of the *Tafsir*, from Sūrah al-Fatḥ to the end, was completed by Qādi Shihāb al-Din ibn Khalil al-Khawli al-Dimashqi (died 639 Hijrah) or Shaykh Najm al-Din Ahmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qamūli (died 777 Hijrah). (Kashaf al-Zunun v. 2, p. 477)

Imām Rāzi has particularly emphasised scholastic debates and the refutation of false sects in accordance with the dictates of his time, and while doing so, his discussions have become too lengthy at several places, therefore, some people have made the following comment on his *Tafsir*: فيه كل شيئ الا التفسير : 'There is everything in this (book) except the *Tafsir*.' But this comment is a terrible injustice to Tafsir Kabir. That which is the truth has already been stated above, namely, that this *Tafsir* enjoys a high rating as far as the resolution of the meanings of the Qur'ān is concerned. But, there are places where he has explained verses of the Qur'ān while moving away from the consensus of the *ummah*, however, such places are very thinly spread out in this book that goes on to eight volumes.

Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ

This was written by 'Allāmah Abū Hayyān al-Gharnāṭī al-Andalūsī (died 754 Hijrah) who was a master of syntax and rhetoric in addition to other Islamic fields of learning. As a result of this, his own *Tafsīr* is soaked in syntax and rhetoric. He places special stress on investigating into the words of every verse, the difference in structures and on points of eloquence.

Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ

This was written by Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Rāzī (died 370 Hijrah) who occupies a distinguished place among Hanafi jurists. The deduction of juristic injunctions and rulings from the noble Qur'ān is the subject of this book. Instead of explaining verses in serial continuity, he has taken up the juristic details as called for by verses which consist of juristic injunctions. Several other books have also been written on this subject, but this book enjoys a prominent place among those.

Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthur

This was written by 'Allāmah Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (died 910 Hijrah). Its full name is 'al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi l'Ma'thūr.' Here 'Allāmah al-Suyūtī has tried to collect all narrations about the *tafsīr* of Qur'ān he was able to find. Several *ḥadīth* scholars such as Hāfiz ibn Jarīr, Imām Baghawi, Ibn Mardūwayh, Ibn Hibbān and Ibn Mājah and others had already worked in this area on their own. 'Allāmah al-Suyūtī has assembled narrations presented by all of them in this book. But, rather than refer to complete chain of authorities along with narrations, he has found it sufficient to simply name the particular author who has presented that narration under his authority so that, if needed, one could go back to the work and investigate into the ultimate authority. Since his purpose was to put together a mass of narrations, as a result of which, all sorts of narrations, sound and weak, have found their way into his book. Hence, every narration allowed entry by him cannot be considered reliable without investigation into its authority. There are occasions when 'Allāmah al-Suyūtī does indicate with each narration the degree of its authority as well. But, as he is known to be fairly easy-going in respect of *ḥadīth* critique, it is still difficult to fully rely on that too.

Al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī

This was written by Qādī Thanāullah Pānipatī (died 1225 Hijrah). He has named this *Tafsir* as 'Al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī' after the name of his spritual master, Mirzā Mazhar Jān-e-Jānān Dehlavī. This *Tafsir* of his is very simple and clear, and extremely useful to locate brief explanations of Qur'ānic verses. Along with the elucidation of Qur'ānic words, he has also taken up related narrations in ample details, and in doing so, he has made an effort to accept narrations after much more scrutiny as compared with other commentaries.

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī

The full name of this *Tafsīr* is 'Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azim wa al-Sab' al-Mathani' and it was written by 'Allāmah Maḥmud al-Ālūsī (died 1270 Hijrah), the famous scholar of the last period of Baghdad, and comprises of thirty volumes. He has made his best possible effort to make this Tafsīr comprehensive. There are exhaustive discussions on language, syntax, letters, style, and on jurisprudence, articles of faith, scholastics, philosophy, astronomy, mysticism and related narratives of Traditions. He has made an attempt to leave no intellectual aspect pertaining to a verse unexplained. In the case of *ḥadīth* narratives as well, the author of this work has been more cautious as compared to other commentators. From this angle, this is a very comprehensive commentary, and no future venture in connection with the Tafsir of the Qur'ān can now afford to ignore its help.

AL-FĀTIHAH

(The Opening)
This Sūrah is Makkan, and comprises of seven verses

The Merits and Peculiarities of the Sūrah

This Sūrah (Chapter) of the Holy Qur'ān possesses a number of merits peculiar to it. Firstly, the Holy Qur'ān begins with it; the prescribed prayer begins with it; and even in the order of revelation this is the first Surah which was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in its complete form. Some verses of the Sūrahs Iqra' (al-'Alaq), al-Muzzammil and al-Muddaththir had no doubt been revealed earlier, but the first Sūrah to be revealed in a complete form is no other than this. Certain Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have reported that this was the first Sūrah to be revealed. Most probably they had meant that no Sūrah had been revealed in a complete form before this. Perhaps that is why the Sūrah has been named as '*Fātihatul-Kitāb*' (The Opening of the Book).

The other important peculiarity of the Sūrah is that it is, so to say, the quintessence of the Holy Qur'ān, and the rest of the Qur'ān is its elaboration. The Sūrah may thus be delineated for two reasons. Firstly, all that the Holy Qur'ān has to say is, in one way or another, related to either of the two themes, faith (*'Īmān*) and virtuous deeds (*al-'amal al-salih*), and the basic principles of the two have been

indicated in this Sūrah (See Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Rūh al-Bayān). That is why authentic Traditions (*Aḥadīth*) give to this Sūrah such titles as "*Umm al-Qur'ān*" (Essence of the Qur'ān), "*Umm al-Kitāb*" (Essence of the Book), "*Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Glorious Qur'ān).

Secondly, this Sūrah gives a special instruction to the man who begins the recitation or the study of the Qur'ān _ that he should approach this book with a mind cleansed of all his previous thoughts and opinions, seeking nothing but the Truth and the right path, praying to Allah for being guided in the right path. The Sūrah begins with the praise of Him before whom the request is to be submitted, and ends with the request for guidance. The whole of the Qur'ān is the answer to this request. The answer begins with the words: "*Alif Lām Mīm*. This is the Book", which is an indication that the guidance man had prayed for has been provided in this Book.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, "I swear by Allah who is the master of my life, neither the Torah, nor the Evangile nor the Psalms of David have anything to compare with the Opening Chapter of the Qur'ān, and no other Chapter of the Qur'ān itself can compare with it." (Reported by the Companion Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said that this Sūrah is a cure for all kinds of illnesses. According to another Tradition (*Ḥadīth*), the Sūrah has also been named the "Cure" (*Al-Shifā*), (See Qurṭubī), and al-Bukhārī reports from the Companion Anas that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has called this Sūrah the greatest among all the Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān. (See Qurṭubī)

﴿ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴾

(I begin) with the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Bismillāh is a verse of the Holy Qur'ān

There is consensus of all the Muslims on the fact that *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Rahīm* is a verse of the Holy Qur'ān, being a part of the Sūrah al-Naml (The Ant); and there is also an agreement on that this

verse is written at the head of every Sūrah except the Sūrah al-Taubah. But there is a difference of opinion among the *Mujtāhids* (the authentic scholars who are entitled to express an opinion in such matters) as to whether this verse is an integral part of the Sūrah al-Fatihah or of all the Sūrahs or not. According to the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, it is not an integral part of any Sūrah except al-Naml, rather it is in itself an independent verse of the Holy Qur'ān which has been revealed for being placed at the beginning of every Surah in order to separate and distinguish one Sūrah from another.

The merits of *Bismillāh*

It was a custom in the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*) before the advent of Islam that people began everything they did with the names of their idols or gods. It was to eradicate this practice that the first verse of the Holy Qur'ān which the Archangel Jibrā'il brought down to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded him to begin the Qur'ān with the name of Allah اِقْرَاْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ:"Read with the name of your Lord."

The famous commentator al-Suyuti says that beside the Holy Qur'ān all the other divine books too begin with *Bismillāh*. Certain other scholars are of the opinion that *Bismillāh Al-Raḥmān Al-Rahīm* is peculiar to the Qur'ān and to the followers of Muḥammad ﷺ . The two views can be brought into agreement with each other if we say that all the divine books share the common trait of beginning with the name of Allah, but the words *Bismillāh Al-Raḥmān Al-Rahīm* are peculiar to the Holy Qur'ān, as is evident from certain Traditions (*Aḥadīth*) which report that in order to begin with the name of Allah anything he undertook, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say the words بِاسْمِكَ اللّٰهُمَّ (*Bismikā Allāhumma*), but when the verse *Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim* was revealed, he adopted these words. Since then this practice was established through the verbal command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or through his act or tacit approval). (See Qurṭubī and Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

The Holy Qur'ān again and again instructs us to begin what we do with the name of Allah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that no important work receives the blessings of Allah, unless it is begun

with His name. According to yet another *ḥadīth* (Tradition), closing the door of one's house, putting out the lamp, covering a vessel, should all be done with the recitation of *Bismillāh*. The Holy Qur'ān and the *aḥādīth* (Traditions) repeatedly instruct us to recite this verse while taking food, drinking water, performing the *wuḍū* (ablution), getting on a carriage or getting down from it. (See Qurṭubī)

By instructing man to begin everything with the name of Allah, Islam has given to the whole of his life an orientation towards Allah so that he may, with each step he takes, renew his allegiance to the covenant with Allah that nothing he does, not even his very being can come into existence without the will and the help of Allah. Thus, all the economic and worldly activities of man, each movement and gesture becomes transformed into an act of worship.[1] How brief is the action, which consumes neither time nor energy, and yet how immense is the gain -- it is a regular alchemy, transmuting the profane (*dunyā*) into the sacred (*dīn*); a disbeliever eats and drinks just as a Muslim does but in saying '*Bismillāh*' as he begins to eat, the Muslim affirms that it was not in his power to obtain this little morsel of food which has passed through innumerable stages from the sowing of the seed to the reaping of the grain corn, and which has during this process required the labours of the wind, the rain, the sun, of the heavens and of the earth, and of a thousand men -- and that it is Allah alone who has granted him this morsel of food or this draught of water by making it go through all these stages. A disbeliever goes to sleep, wakes up and goes about as much as a Muslim. But while going to sleep or waking up, the Muslim mentions the name of Allah, renewing his relationship with Him. Thus his economic and worldly needs and activities acquire the nature of the remembrance of Allah, and are counted as acts of worship. Similarly, in saying '*Bismillāh*' while getting on to a carriage, the Muslim testifies to the fact that it is beyond the power of man to produce this carriage and to procure it for him, and that it is only the infallible and divinely-created order of

1. This is the only way in which human life can, to use a word dear to modern cultural anthropology, be sacralized in any meaningful sense of the term -- Translator

things that has brought together from all the corners of the world the wood, the steel and other metals which have gone into the making of the carriage, as well as the mechanics who have given a particular shape to these components, and the driver -- and finally put all these into the service of man who can make use of the labour of this army of the creatures of man who can God by spending a few coins. And even these coins have not been created by him, it is Allah himself who has provided the complex ways and means of earning them. Veritably, '*Bismillāh*' is the legendary philosopher's stone which transmutes, not copper, but mere dust into the purest of gold. فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ عَلٰى دِيْنِ الْاِسْلَامِ وَتَعْلِيْمَاتِه :'So then, praised be Allah for the religion of Islam and its teachings.'

Ruling

'Before beginning to recite the Qur'ān, it is *sunnah* to first say اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ (I seek refuge with Allah from Satan -- the accursed) and then بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (I begin with the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful). And during the *tilāwah* (the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān) as well, saying بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ: '*Bismillah*... at the beginning of each Sūrah, except the Sūrah Al-Bara'ah (al-Taūbah), is *Sunnah*.

Commentary

'***Bismillāh***': This phrase is composed of three words -- the letter '*Bā*', '*Ism*' and 'Allah'. The preposition '*Ba*' has several connotations in Arabic, three of which are appropriate to the occasion. All the three are applicable here: (1) Contiguity, or the close proximity between one thing and the other; (2) Seeking the aid of someone or something; (3) To seek the blessings of someone.

The word '*Ism*' has many lexical and intellectual nuances of meaning, the knowledge of which would not be essential for the average reader. It is sufficient to know that this word is translated in English as 'Name'.

The word, 'Allah' is the greatest and the most comprehensive of the divine names. According to some scholars, it is the 'Great Name', or '*Al-Ism al-A'zam*'. (According to the Tradition (*Ḥadīth*), the Great Name carries with it such a benediction that a prayer is granted when this word has been uttered. Reports differ as to what this Great Name

is). The word 'Allah' refers to the Essence, and hence this name cannot be given to anyone except Allah. That is why this word has neither a plural nor a dual, for Allah is One and has no associate. In short, Allah is the name of that Ultimate Reality which comprehends in Itself all the attributes of perfection, which is the creator and sustainer, unique and peerless.

Thus, the phrase '*Bismillāh*' has these three respective significations according to the three connotations of the preposition '*Ba*':

(a) With the name of Allah

(b) With the help of the name of Allah

(c) With the *barakah* or benediction of the name of Allah.

But, in all the three forms, the phrase obviously remains incomplete unless one mentions the work which one intends to begin with the name of Allah or with its help or benediction. So, according to the rules of grammar, some verb is taken to be understood here which should be suitable for the occasion -- e.g., 'I begin or recite with the name of Allah.' Propriety demands that even this verb should be understood to occur after the phrase, so that one does actually begin with the name of Allah and the verb does not precede His name. The preposition '*Bā*' has, however, to be placed before the name of Allah, for it is an exigency of the Arabic language. But even in this respect the 'Uthmāni manuscript of the Holy Qur'ān prepared by the third Caliph 'Uthmān رضی الله عنه has made the necessary modification in accordance with the consensus of the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . The regular Arabic script requires the letter '*Bā*' here to be joined with the letter '*Alif*', producing this shape -- بِاسْمِ اللهِ . But the 'Uthmani manuscript has dropped the '*Alif*', and joined the letter '*Bā*' with the letter '*Sīn*', making the '*Bā*' look like a part of the word '*Ism*', so that the beginning is made, in effect, with the name of Allah. That is why the letter '*Alif*' is not dropped in other combinations between the preposition '*Bā*' and the noun '*Ism*' -- for example, in the verse اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ (*Iqrā' biismi Rabbik*), the '*Alif*' is written along with the '*Bā*'. It is the peculiarity of '*Bismillāh*' alone that the letter '*Ba*' has been joined with the letter '*Sin*'.

Merciful) -- these two are the attributes of Allah Almighty. '*Raḥmān*' signifies one whose mercy is common to all, and extends to the whole universe, to everything that will be created in the future. On the other hand, '*Raḥīm*' signifies one whose mercy is perfect in all possible ways. That is why '*Raḥmān*' is the exclusive attribute of Allah and the word is employed only when one is referring to Him. It is not permissible to qualify any created being as '*Raḥmān*', for there cannot possibly be anyone else, beside Allah, whose mercy should be all-embracing and all-inclusive. Just like the word 'Allah', there is no dual or plural for the word '*Raḥmān*' too, because these words are in their signification exclusive to the One and Absolute Being which does not permit the existence of a second or a third. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī) The signification of the word '*Rahim*', on the contrary, does not contain anything which it should be impossible to find in a created being, for a man may be perfectly merciful in his dealings with another man. So, the word '*Rahim*' may justifiably be employed in the case of a human being -- as the Qur'ān itself has used the word in speaking of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is: بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (He is gentle and very merciful towards the Muslims).

Ruling: This would easily show that those who shorten names such as 'Abd al-Raḥmān or Fadl al-Rahman into '*Raḥmān*' are doing what is not permissible and are thus committing a sin.

Out of the 'Beautiful Names' (الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ : *Al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*) of Allah Almighty and His attributes of perfection, only two have been mentioned in this verse - namely, '*al-Raḥmān*' and '*al-Rahīm*' -, and both have been derived from the root '*Rahmah*' (mercy), indicating the all-pervasiveness and perfection of divine mercy. It points to the fact that the creation of the heavens and the earth and the sustenance of the whole universe has no other motivation than making manifest Allah's quality of mercy. He Himself had no need of these things, nor could anyone compel Him to create them. It is His own mercy which has required the creation and sustenance of the whole universal order.

How aptly this was put in Persian by poet *Rūmī*:

مانبوديم و تقاضا ما نبود
لطف تو ناگفته مامی شنود

There was nothing -- neither our being nor our claim to be;
It was Thy mercy that heard our unsaid.

Injunctions and related considerations

The Holy Qur'an says: فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ :'When you recite the Qur'an, seek the protection of Allah against Satan, the rejected one'.

According to the consensus of *Ummah*, it is a *Sunnah* to say *ta'āwwudh*: أَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ 'before the recitation of the Holy Qur'an whether in *Salāh* or out of *Salāh* (*Sharah al-munyah*). Saying *ta'awwudh* is peculiar to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an. Therefore, with the exception of *tilawah*, all other chores should be taken up by first saying *'Bismillāh'* only. Saying *ta'awwudh* is not a *sunnah* there. ('Alamgiri, Chapter 4 - Al-Karahiyah)

One should begin the recitation of the Qur'an by reciting both أعوذ ... بالله (I seek the protection of Allah) and بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ (*Bismillāhi*: I begin with the name of Allah). During the recitation, one should repeat *'Bismillāh'*, but not *'A'udhubillāh'*, when one comes to the end of a Sūrah (or Chapter) and begins the next Sūrah -- with the sole exception of the Sūrah 'Al-Bara'ah' (اَلْبَرَاءَةْ). If one comes upon this particular Sūrah in the course of the recitation, one should not say *'Bismillāh'* before reading it. But if one happens to begin the recitation of the Holy Qur'an with this Sūrah, one should recite *'A'udhubillāh'* and *'Bismillāh'* both (Alamgiriah from Al-Muḥit).

'Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahim' is a verse of the Holy Qur'an and a part of the verse in Sūrah 'al-Naml'; it is also a regular verse when it occurse between two Sūrahs. It must, therefore, be treated with as much respect as the Holy Qur'an itself, and it is not permissible to touch it without having performed *wudu* (ablution). In the state of major ritual impurity (e.g., after the emission of semen, or during menstruation, or after child-birth), it is not allowed to even read this verse as recitation of the Holy Qur'an before having taken a ritual bath. One may, however, recite it as a form of prayer before beginning a work, like taking one's meals or drinking water under all conditions.

Rulings:

(1) It is a *Sunnah* to recite *'Bismillāh'* after *'A'udhū-billah'* at the very beginning of the first *raka'ah* in the *salāh*. But views differ as to whether it should be recited in a loud or a low voice. Īmām Abū

Hanifah and certain other Imāms prefer it to be done in a low voice. There is a consensus on the point that '*Bismillāh*' should be recited at the beginning of all the succeeding *raka'ahs* too. This is unanimously considered to be a *Sunnah*; however, in some narrations, the reciting of '*Bismillāh*' at the beginning of every *raka'ah* has been identified as *wajib* or necessary.

(2) In the course of *salāh*, whether one is reciting the Holy Qur'ān loudly or silently, one should not recite '*Bismillāh*' before beginning a Sūrah just after the Sūrah 'Fatihah'. Such a practice has not been reported either from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or from any of the first four *Khulafā'*. According to *Sharh al-munyah*, this is the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and of Imām Abu Yusuf, and Shrah al-munyah, al-Durr al-Mukhtar, al-Burhan etc. prefer it to other views. But Imām Muḥammad considers it to be preferable that one should recite '*Bismillah*' if one is reciting the Holy Qur'an in a *salāh* offered silently. Certain reports attribute this view even to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, and al-Shāmi has quoted some Muslim jurists in support of this view -- which has been adopted even in 'Bahishti Zewar' of Maulanā Thānavi. Anyhow, there is a complete agreement among the scholars that it is not *makrūh* or reprehensible for some one to recite '*Bismillāh*' in this situation.

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SŪRAH AL - FĀTIḤAH

(The Opening)

MAKKAN	VERSES: 7

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۝

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝ اَلرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۝ مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ۝
اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَ اِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ ۝ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ۝
صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا
الضَّآلِّيْنَ ۝

With the name of Allah,
the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful, the Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help. Guide us in the straight path -- the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

This Sūrah comprises seven verses. Of these, the first three are in praise of Allah, while the last three contain a request or a prayer on the part of man, which Allah himself has, in His infinite mercy, taught him. The verse in between the two sets has both the features -- there is an aspect of praise, and another of prayer.

The Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports from the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah a *ḥadīth* (Tradition) of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : "Allah has said, 'The *salāh* (i.e., the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah) is equally

divided between Me and My servant. And My servant shall be given what he prays for." The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم continued: "When the servant says:

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds,

Allah says: "My servant has paid his homage to Me." When he says:

اَلرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

The All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful,

Allah says: "My servant has praised Me." When the servant says:

مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ

The Master of the Day of Judgment,

Allah says, "My servant has proclaimed my greatness." When the servant says:

اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ

You alone we worship, and to You alone we pray for help,

Allah says, "This verse is common to Me and My servant. He shall be given what he has prayed for." When the servant says:

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ

Guide us in the straight path...,

Allah says: "All this is there for My servant. He shall be given what he prays for." (Maẓharī)

The Sūrah begins with the words *Al-hamdulillāh*, signifying that all praise essentially belongs to Allah. Whosoever praises anything anywhere in the world is ultimately praising Allah. The sensible world contains millions of things which compel man's attention and admiration for their beauty and usefulness, but if one tries to look behind the veil of appearances, one would find in each and every thing the manifestation of the same creative power. Admiring anything that exists in the created world is no more than showing one's admiration

for a work of art or craft, which in fact is a praise of the artist or the craftsman. This small statement of the Holy Qur'ān opens a new perspective for man lost in the labyrinth of multiplicity, and shows him how the many are knit together in the same unity, and how all praise in reality belongs to One whose power is absolute, and that it is only in our ignorance or indifference that we regard this praise to be due to anyone else.

If there is only one Being in the whole universe who inherently deserves all praise, it necessarily follows from it that this Being alone should be worthy of adoration and worship. Thus we can see that although the phrase, *Al-hamdulillāh*, has been used to signify praise, yet, by implication, it cuts the very root of polytheism or the worship of created beings, and at the same time brings out in a self-evident manner the first and the basic principle of the Islamic creed -- Oneness of God.

The next phrase to follow in the Sūrah speaks of an attribute of Allah -- Lord of the Worlds. Lexically, the word, *Rabb* signifies 'one who nurtures'. And 'nurture' implies developing a thing by gradual stages in a manner which is conducive to its own good till it attains perfection. The word, *Rabb* is exclusive to the sacred Being of Allah, and cannot be employed in the case of any created being without adding some qualification, for a created being is itself in need of 'nurture', and cannot nurture anyone else.

Al-'alāmīn is the plural of *'alam* (world, universe, kingdom). "The worlds" include all possible forms of -- existence: the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, stars, wind and rain, the angels, the jinns, animals, plants, minerals, and, of course, men. So, 'the Lord of all the worlds" means that Allah alone gives nurture to all the forms of existents that are to be found in this universe, or in the millions of universes that may lie beyond our own universe in the outer space. Imām Rāzī, the great commentator of the Holy Qur'ān, says that the existence of an indefinite space beyond our universe can be proved on the basis of rational argument, and it is also certain that Allah is All-Powerful, so it should not be at all difficult for Him to have created millions of other universes in this endless space. It has been reported from the Companion Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ that there are forty thousand

worlds; our world, stretching from the East to the West, is only one of them, there being many more besides it. According to the well-known commentator *Muqatil*, the number of worlds is eighty thousand. (See Qurṭubī)

As for the objection that no man or animal can live in the outer space owing to the lack of the kind of air which should be compatible with the physical make-up of man, Imām Rāẓī replies that the inhabitants of the worlds in the outer space need not necessarily have the same physical make-up as that of the inhabitants of our world which should make existence in space impossible for them, and suggests that their organic composition and the requirements for its nourishment and sustenance might just be totally different.

Imām Rāẓī postulated these possibilities some eight hundred years ago without the help of the modern facilities for observation and exploration, yet the speculations of the scientists in the age of space travel endorse his view.

Seen in the light of this short phrase, 'Lord of the worlds', the universe reveals itself to be an incredibly complex, yet perfectly integrated order. From the heavens to the earth, from the planets and the stars to the particles of dust, everything is bound in a chain of being, and is performing the function assigned to it by Divine Wisdom. Man cannot obtain a little morsel of food unless a thousand forces of the sky and the earth work together to produce it. The universal order is there for man to contemplate, and to realize that, if Allah has put millions of His creatures in the service of man, man in his turn cannot be worthless or purposeless or meaningless.[2] The Holy Qur'ān is indeed very explicit and very insistent in reminding us that the universe is not absurd:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنَ النَّارِ

> We have not created in vain the heavens and the earth and what lies between them. That is the fancy of the disbelievers. But woe to the disbelievers in the fire of Hell. (38:27)

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2. As do proclaim the current Western philosophies of the Absurd and of Unreason.

If the universe is not in vain or absurd, man too, whose purposes the universe has been made to serve, cannot be purposeless and meaningless. The Holy Qur'ān defines the Divine purpose in creating man and the goal of his existence in these words.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ

I have not created the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. (51:56)

It may be said that the phrase 'the Lord of all the worlds' is in a way the proof of the claim made in the earlier phrase اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰه : (all praise belongs to Allah). When Allah alone is the ultimate cause for the nurture of the whole universe, He alone can, in reality, be worthy of praise. Thus, the first verse of the Surah, as we said before, combines in itself the praise of Allah and a subtle indication of the first and basic principle of the Islamic creed -- the oneness of God.

The second verse speaks of the Divine quality of mercy, employing two adjectives *Raḥmān* and *Rahīm*, both of which are hyperbolic terms in Arabic, and respectively connote the superabundance and perfection of Divine mercy. The reference to this particular attribute in this situation is perhaps intended to be a reminder of the fact that it is not through any external compulsion or inner need or any kind of necessity whatsoever that Allah has assumed the responsibility of nurturing the whole of His creation, but in response to the demand of His own quality of mercy. If this whole universe did not exist, He would suffer no loss; if it does exist, it is no burden to Him.

The third verse pays homage to Allah as 'the Master of the Day of Judgment or Requital': مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ . The word *Mālik* has been derived from the root, '*milk*' (مِلْك) which signifies possessing a thing in such a manner that one has the right and power to dispose of it as one likes (See Qamus). The word *Dīn* signifies 'Requital'. So, the phrase 'Master of the Day of Requital' implies total mastery on the Day of Requital. But there is no mention of the thing or things to which this mastery or possession would apply. According to the commentary, '*al-Kashshaf*', the phrase makes a general reference to cover everything. That is to say, on the Day of Requital the mastery over everything that exists will belong to Allah alone.

The Day of Requital is real and rational:

Before we proceed, let us consider two important questions: Firstly, what is this Day of Requital? Secondly, Allah being the Master, of everything even today as much as on the Day of Requital, why does this verse specifically mention the Day of Requital? The Day of Requital or the Day of Judgment is the Day appointed by Allah to recompense good or evil deeds.[3] The world is only the field of action, the place where one is required to perform one's duty, and not the place for receiving one's reward. The mere fact that man happens to be healthy and wealthy or powerful does not necessarily argue that he has won the pleasure and favour of Allah. Similarly, the mere fact that a man happens to be ill or poor or weak or miserable does not by itself indicates that he is the object of Allah's wrath. Even in the case of worldly life, would it not be a platitude to remark that a man sweating in a factory or an office does not consider it a misfortune? In fact, try to deprive him of this opportunity to sweat, and you would have earned his deepest displeasure; for beyond all this toil he can glimpse the reward he is going to get after thirty days in the shape of his wages.

It proceeds from this principle that the greatest sufferings in this world are the lot of the Prophets عليهم السلام and, after them, of the men of Allah, and yet we see them quite content and even happy. In short, physical well-being or worldly glory or luxury is no sure indication of one's virtue and truthfulness, nor is sorrow and suffering that of one's misdeeds and falsity. It may, however, happen that a man receives some punishment or reward for his deeds in this world. This never is the full recompense, but only a faint model which has been manifested to serve as an intimation or warning. The Holy Qur'ān has spoken very clearly on this point:

وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

And We shall surely let them taste a nearer punishment (in

3. The verse qualifies Allah specifically as 'Master of the Day of Requital', and thus emphasizes a principle which is in itself of the highest import, and is particularly relevant to certain tendencies in the modern habits of thought. Contrary to the modern conviction which one finds reflected even in the so called "new interpretations" of Islam, individual or collective well being is not the be-all and end-all of human existence, nor is the physical world the place where good or evil deeds are recompensed -- Translator

> this world) before the greater punishment (in the other world), so that they may return (to the right path). (32:21)
>
> كَذٰلِكَ الْعَذَابُ وَ لَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
>
> Such is the punishment; and the punishment of the other world is certainly greater, only if they knew. (68 : 33)

The sufferings of this world, as even its joys, are sometimes a trial, and sometimes a punishment, but never a full recompense, for the world is itself transitory. What really counts is the joy or suffering that will endure for ever, and which one will come to know in the other world beyond this world. Given the fact that good or evil deeds are not fully recompensed in this world, and the rational and just principle that good and evil not being equal in value, every deed should be rewarded or punished according to its nature, it readily follows that beyond this world there should be another world where every deed, big or small, good or evil, is to be judged, and then justly rewarded or punished. This the Holy Qur'ān calls *Al-Akhirah*: الآخرة (The world-to-come), or *Al-Qiyāmah*: القيامه (Doomsday or the Day of Judgment), or '*Yawm al-din*, (Day of Requital). The whole idea has been explained by the Holy Qur'an itself:

> مَا يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيْٓءُ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ O اِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا، وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ O
>
> The blind are not equal with the seeing, nor the wrong-doers with those who believe and do good deeds. Yet you seldom reflect. The hour of retribution is sure to come, no doubt about it, yet most people do not believe. (40 : 58-59)

Who is the Master ?

Now, we come to the second question. It should be obvious, on a little reflection, to everyone that the real master of every particle of dust in the universe can only be He who has created and nurtured it, Whose mastery over everything is complete, having neither a beginning nor an end, covering the living and the dead, the apparent and the hidden, the seen and the unseen. On the contrary, the mastery of man is delimited by a beginning and an end; it has a 'before' when it did not exist, and an 'after' when it will exist no more. Man's mastery and control extends to the living, not to the dead, to the seen, not to

the unseen, to the external aspect of things, not to the internal. All this would show to those who can see that the real Master of the whole universe, not only on the Day of Requital but even in this world, is no other than Allah. Then why should this verse specify the Day of Requital ?

The verses of the Sūrah al-Mū'min / Ghafir (Chapter 40) serve as a commentary on the phrase under discussion, and provide a clear account of the Day of Requital. The real and complete mastery over everything, no doubt, belongs to Allah alone even in this world. Yet Allah Himself, in His beneficence and wisdom, has granted a kind of imperfect, temporary and apparent mastery to man as well; and the *Sharī'ah*, in laying down laws for worldly affairs, has given due consideration to man's limited right to ownership. But today, in possessing lands or money or power, which has been given to him by way of trial, man has always been prone to get drunk with pride and vanity.[4] The phrase 'Master of the Day of Judgment' is a warning to man reeling in his forgetfulness and self-conceit, and an intimation that all his possessions, all his relationships with things and men are only short-lived, and that there shall come a Day when masters will no more be masters and slaves no more slaves, when no one will own anything even in appearance, and the ownership and mastery, apparent as well as real, of the whole universe will be seen to belong to none but Allah, the Exalted. The Holy Qur'ān says:

يَوْمَ هُم بَارِزُونَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ لِّمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ
الْقَهَّارِ ○ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ○

The day they will present themselves (before Allah), and nothing of theirs will remain hidden from Allah (even apparently). 'Whose is the kingdom today?' Of Allah alone, the One, the Mighty. Today everyone will be recompensed for what he has done. Today no one will be wronged. Allah's reckoning is surely swift. (40:17)

The fourth verse إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ : 'You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help' has a double aspect, one of praise and

4. Specially the modern man living in the so-called 'humanistic civilization' when the sole drive and motivating force is the complacent belief in man's mastery.

another of prayer. A man's life is subject to three states of time -- past, present and future.

The first two verses of the Sūrah, اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (All Praise belongs to Allah) and اَلرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ (the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful), remind man that, as far as his past and present are concerned, he owes everything to Allah alone, for it is Allah who created him out of nothing, endowed him with the best form in the universe, and with reason and intuition, and continues to sustain and nurture him in the present. The third verse: مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ (Master of the Day of Judgment) tells him that in the future too he will have to depend on Allah alone, for on the Day of Requital one cannot possibly have a helper other than Allah. The three verses having made it clear that man is totally and absolutely dependent on Allah in all the three states of his life, it logically and naturally leads to the conclusion that Allah alone is worthy of being worshipped, for in Arabic the word *'ibādah* (worship) connotes showing the utmost humility and submissiveness out of an intense respect and love for someone, and such an attitude of willing self-abasement cannot justly be adopted towards anyone except Allah. So, the phrase: اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ (You alone we worship) expresses this very natural and logical conclusion. And once it has been understood that there is only one Being who can satisfy all our needs, it is equally natural and logical to turn for help in everything to Him alone. Hence the phrase اِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ (to You alone we pray for help). Beside these two aspects, the fourth verse has another dimension as well. It teaches man not to worship anyone except Allah, not to consider anyone else as being really capable of satisfying his needs, and not to beg anyone else to satisfy these needs. It does not, however, go against this principle if, in praying to Allah, one mentions the name of a prophet or a man of Allah by way of a medium (*wasilāh*) for drawing the mercy of Allah upon oneself.

It may also be noticed that the phrase: اِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ (to You alone we pray for help) does not mention the purpose for which help is being sought. According to most of the commentators, it generalizes the idea of the request to cover everything from acts of worship to all possible worldly or other-worldly concerns.

Then, acts of worship (*'Ibādah*) are not limited merely to prescribed prayers or fasting. Imām al-Ghāzzāli in his book 'Arba'in' has enumerated ten forms which worship can take:-

1. Prayers.
2. Prescribed Alms-giving.
3. Fasting.
4. Hajj or pilgrimage to Makkah.
5. Reciting the Holy Qur'ān.
6. Remembrance of Allah in all possible situations.
7. Earning one's livelihood in accordance with the regulations of the *Sharī'ah*.
8. Fulfilling one's obligations towards one's companions and neighbours.
9. Persuading people to act righteously and dissuading them from what is reprehensible and forbidden.
10. To follow the *Sunnah*, or the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Therefore, not associating anyone with Allah in worship means that one should not love or fear or depend on anyone else as one loves or fears or depends on Allah, nor should one repose one's hope in anyone else, nor should one consider obedience or submission or service to another as obligatory as the worship of Allah, nor make a votive offering or consecrate or dedicate anything to anyone or take a vow in the name of anyone similar to the way one does these things in the case of Allah, nor should one show complete self-abasement and total humility before anyone as one is required to do before Allah, nor should one engage in the particular God-oriented acts of worship for anyone other than Allah, acts which symbolize the farthest limits of self-abasement, such as, *ruku'* and *sajdah* (the bowing and prostrating in *salāh*).

The Prayer for Guidance

The last three verses of the Sūrah consist of a prayer on the part of man. In other words, Allah Himself, in His great mercy, has taught man what to pray for:

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ O صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۙ۬ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ O

Guide us in the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

The Implications of Guidance

A problem of highest significance arises here. The teaching with regard to the prayer for being guided in the straight path is addressed equally to all men or all Muslims and to saints and prophets who have already received guidance and are even a source of guidance for other men. Why should these repeatedly pray for something they already possess? The answer to this question depends on knowing all that is implied by guidance. The answer would, at the same time, remove all difficulties and confusions which arise in the minds of those who, not being familiar with the true signification of guidance, begin to suspect that certain verses of the Holy Qur'ān were contradicting certain others.

The Meaning of *Hidāyah* or Guidance

The best explanation of the word, *Hidāyah* (guidance) has been offered by Imām Raghib al-Isfaḥānī in his Mufradat al-Qur'ān, which can be summed up thus: *Hidayah* signifies leading someone towards his destination, gently and kindly; while guidance, in the real sense, issues forth from Allah alone, and it has several degrees.

The First Degree of Guidance

The first degree of guidance is general, and covers everything that exists in the universe -- minerals, plants, animals etc. It would surprise many to hear of guidance in relation to minerals. But the Holy Qur'ān makes it quite clear that all forms of existents in the universe, and every particle of dust possesses life, sensitivity, and even consciousness and understanding in its own degree and according to its own sphere of existence. Some of these existents possess more of this essence than others, and some less. Hence, those who have very little of it are considered to be inanimate and devoid of consciousness. The *Sharī'ah* too has recognized this difference, and such creatures have not been made to bear the obligation of observing the injunctions of Allah. The creatures which show obvious signs of life but not those of consiousness and reason are considered to be living, but not rational; whereas, creatures showing the signs of consciousness and reason, along with those of life, are called rational beings. Because of these differences in the degrees of consciousness, men and jinn alone, of all the existents in the universe, have been made subservient to the

injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* and accountable for their actions, for they alone have the necessary consciousness and understanding. But, it does not mean that other creatures or existents are totally devoid of life or sensitivity, or of consciousness and understanding. The Holy Qur'ān is very explicit on this point:

وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ

> Nothing exists that does not celebrate His praise, but you do not understand their (mode of) praising. (17:44)

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صٰٓفّٰتٍ كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ وَتَسْبِيْحَهٗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝

> Have you not seen that everything in the heavens and the earth proclaims Allah's purity, and the birds too that spread their wings? Each of them knows its prayer and its (mode of) praising. And Allah is aware of what they do. (24:41)

Evidently, one cannot extol and praise Allah without knowing Allah. It is equally evident that knowing Allah is the highest form of knowledge possible, and such a knowledge cannot be gained unless one possesses consciousness and understanding. These verses, therefore, show that everything that exists in the universe possesses life, sensitivity, understanding and consciousness, though it may not always be apparent to the ordinary observer -- a truth which has been endorsed by all the great religions, by certain ancient philosophers, and lately even by experimental science.

This, then, is the first degree of guidance which is common to minerals, plants, animals, men, jinns and all the forms of creation. The Holy Qur'ān speaks of this primary and general guidance in these words:

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِىْٓ اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى

He gave to everything its distinctive form, and then guided it. (20:50)

Or, as we find in another Sūrah:

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْاَعْلٰى ۝ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ فَسَوّٰى ۝ وَالَّذِىْ قَدَّرَ فَهَدٰى ۝

> Celebrate the name of your Lord, the Most High, Who has

created all things, well proportioned them, and Who has determined and guided them. (87:1-2)

That is to say, Allah has given every creature a particular nature and function, and guided it in a way which should correspond to its station in the scheme of things. Thanks to this general guidance, everything in the universe is performing its allotted function with such marvellous efficiency. For example, it is the ears that hear a sound and not the eyes or the nose. Similarly, the nose smells but cannot see; the eyes see but cannot smell. In short:

إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّآ اٰتِى الرَّحْمٰنِ عَبْدًا ۝

There is nothing in the heavens and the earth but comes to the All-Merciful as a servant. (19:93)

The Second Degree of Guidance

Unlike the first, the second degree of guidance is not general but particular. It is limited to those creatures which are considered to be rational, that is, men and jinns. This kind of guidance comes to every man through prophets and revealed books. Some accept this guidance, and become believers (*Muslims*): some reject it and become disbelievers (*Kāfirs*).

The Third Degree of guidance

The third degree of guidance is still more particular, being special to true believers (*Mu'minīn*) and the God-fearing (*Muttaqīn*). Like the first degree, the third kind of guidance too descends directly to the individual from Allah, and it is called, *Tawfīq*. That is to say, Allah's grace provides a man with internal and external means and circumstances which should make it easy, and even pleasant for him to accept and act upon the guidance of the Holy Qur'ān, and difficult to ignore or oppose it. The scope of the third degree of guidance is limitless, and its levels indefinite.[5] Here is the sphere in which man, not only can, but is required to make a progress in the veritable sense of the term. The agency of this progress is the performance of virtuous

5. Contrary to all the modern fictions about man's Evolution or Perfectibility or Progress which may pass for sound philosophy or science.

deeds[6]. All increase in virtuous deeds brings with it an increase in divine guidance. The Holy Qur'ān itself gives us the promise of such increase:

وَالَّذِيْنَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى

As for those who follow the straight path, Allah will increase their guidance. (47:17)

وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْ بِاللّٰهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهٗ

And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart. (64:11)

اَلَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

Those who strive for (literally, 'in') Us, We will surely guide them in Our paths. (29:69)

It is in this field of progress that we see even the greatest prophets and men of Allah striving, and it is an increase in divine guidance and help that they keep seeking to their last breath.

A Cumulative view of guidance

Keeping in mind the three distinct degrees of guidance, one can easily see that guidance is a thing which everyone does possess in some way, and yet no one, not even the greatest, can do without wishing to attain more of its advanced and higher stages. Hence, of all the prayers man can address to Allah, the most important is the prayer for guidance, which has been taught to us in the very first Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān; and this prayer is as necessary for the greatest of prophets and men of Allah as for an ordinary Muslim. That is why the Sūrah Al-Fatḥ (Victory), in enumerating the material and spiritual benefits of the conquest of Makkah in the last days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , also says: وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا (and to guide you on the straight path) (48:20). When these verses were revealed, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had already received guidance and was a source of guidance for others. The good tidings of receiving guidance can, in this situation, have only one meaning that he attained some very high station of guidance at the time.

Guidance: Some notes of caution

In concluding this discussion about the different implications of

6. As defined, it goes without saying, by the *Sharī'ah* and not by individual or collective fancy, or by custom and habits, or by the fads or fashions of the day.

'guidance' (*Hidāyah*), we repeat points that would help the reader of the Holy Qur'an avoid certain confusions and errors:

1. The Holy Qur'ān sometimes speaks of divine guidance as being general and common to believers and non-believers, in fact to all creatures, and sometimes makes it out to be particular and special to the God-fearing. So, the unwary may be led to sense a contradiction here. But once it is understood that one degree of guidance is common to all, whereas another degree is limited to particular cases, the doubt and confusion readily resolves itself.

2. On the one hand, the Holy Qur'ān reminds us again and again that Allah does not grant guidance to the unjust and the unrighteous; on the other hand, it repeatedly declares that Allah guides all. The misunderstanding which may arise here is also dispelled by a knowledge of the degrees of guidance. Now we can easily see that the general guidance is given to all without any distinction, but the third and very special degree of guidance is not granted to the unjust and the unrighteous.

3. The first and the third degrees of guidance pertain to a direct act of divine grace, and no prophet can have anything to do with it, for the function of the prophets is related only to the second degree.

Whenever the Holy Qur'ān speaks of Prophets عليهم السلام as guides, it is always referring to this second degree, and to it alone. On the other hand, when the Holy Qur'ān, addressing the noble Prophet ﷺ, says: إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ (You cannot guide whom you please) (28:56), it is the third degree of guidance which is intended, that is to say, it is neither the function of a prophet nor is it in his power to provide *tawfīq* to anyone, in other words, to make it easy for anyone to accept guidance. [7]

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7. **Translator's Note**: In this context one should not overlook the popularity enjoyed in the West, since the rise of Protestantism, by the notion of a personal relationship with God on the part of the individual. This notion has in its turn produced a diffused yet very effective conviction that ethics can be made independent of religion, that the external or legislative aspect of religion is of no account, that prescribed rites are irrelevant to the so-called 'religious experience', and more monstrously still, that doctrines can be dispensed with altogether -- all of which betrays a total incomprehension of what constitutes a religion. The tendency has, in fact, begun to infect some of the modernist interpreters of Islam in one way or another, all of whom claim to be fulfilling the 'needs of the present age'. Attempts have been made even to exploit this notion for ulterior motives.

Continued

To sum up, the Qur'anic prayer اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ (guide us in the straight path) is most comprehensive, and certainly, one of the most important prayers taught to man. No member of the human family can claim not to need it. No success, no prosperity in this or in the other world can really come without being on the straight path. Particularly so, for man lost in the anxieties of mortal life, the prayer for the straight path is an elixir, though people do not realize it.

Which 'path' is 'straight'?

Now, to come to the meaning of the 'straight path', it is the path which has no turns and twists. The term signifies the particular way of Faith which equally avoids the two extremes of excess and deficiency. One who follows the straight path would, in matters of doctrine and practice both, neither go beyond the limits nor fall short of them.

The last two verses of the Surah Al-Fatihah define and identify that 'straight path', something man has been prompted to pray for immediately earlier. The verse says: صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace). As to who these people are, another verse of the Holy Qur'an gives us details in the following words:

اَلَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ

Those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the prophets, the *Siddiqin*, the *Shuhada'*, and the righteous. (4:69)

Continued In persuading the Muslim countries to look upon themselves as 'the eastern-most part of the West', the London ECONOMIST argues that Islam 'also implies a one-to-one relationship between the believer and the God he believes in, a direct contact without intermediary and in this relationship, in which a single God speaks directly to the core of a single man, is the basis of individualism. The Protestant ethic is grounded on precisely the same concept.' (May 17-23, 1975, page 82 of the Special Survey).

In the light of the discussion regarding the three degrees of guidance, it should not be difficult to see that the direct contact with God without intermediary pertains only to the first and third degrees, and not the second degree where the mediation of the prophets is indispensable. To attain the third degree may be necessary for making a spiritual progress, but Islam, or for that matter any authentic religion, is born out of the second degree of guidance. One cannot, indeed, enjoy the benefits of the third degree without having accepted the guidance of the second degree -- or, to use the Islamic terminology, without following the *Shari'ah*.

These are the four categories of those who find favour with Allah. Among them all, the prophets are the greatest. The *Siddiqin* (the constantly true) are those who acquire spiritual perfection, and thus -- attain the highest rank among the followers of a prophet. In common parlance, they are called Men of Allah, or saints.[8] The *Shuhadā'* (martyrs) are those who sacrifice even their lives for the sake of their faith (or, who bear witness to the truth, as the word admits of both meanings). The righteous (the *Salihin*) are those who follow the *Sharī'ah* completely, not only in the matter of obligations (*Wājibat*) but also with regard to commendable (*mustaḥabb*) actions. In everyday language they are called the pious or the virtuous or the good.

This verse, then, determines the straight path in a positive manner, identifying it with the path followed by men of these four categories. The next verse, by a process of elimination, does the same in a negative manner by saying:

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ۝

> Not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

Those who have incurred Allah's wrath are the people, who inspite of being quite familiar with the commandments of Allah wilfully go against them out of a calculated perversity or in the service of their desires, or, in other words, who are deficient in obeying divine injunctions. This, for example, was the general condition of the Jews who were ready to sacrifice their religion for the sake of a petty worldly gain, and used to insult and sometimes even to kill their prophets.

As for الضَّالِّينَ (those who go astray), they are the people who, out of ignorance or lack of thought, go beyond the limits appointed by Allah, and indulge in excess and exaggeration in religious matters. This, for example, has generally been the error of the Christians who exceeded the limits in their reverence for a prophet and turned him into a god. On the one hand, there is the rebelliousness of the Jews who not only refused to listen to the prophets of Allah but went on to kill them; on the other hand, there is the excessive zeal of the Christians who deified a prophet.

8. If taken in an untainted religious sense, and certainly not if taken in one of the many modern vulgarized usages of the term where, for instance, you see the halo of spiritual glory over the head of a spy!

Thus, the essential meaning of the verse is that, in praying for the straight path, we do not ask for the path of those who are the slaves of their desires, perverse in thought and action, and deficient in performing their religious obligations, nor the path of those who are ignorant or unmindful or misled, and indulge in excess and exaggeration in religious matters, but wish for a path between these two extremes, which inclines neither towards excess nor towards deficiency, and which is as free of the promptings of desires as of doubts and confusions and of erroneous beliefs.

In short, the prayer for the straight path is the essence of the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah. Since knowing and following the straight path is the real knowledge and the real achievement in this mortal world, a mistake in picking it up right takes peoples and nations to ruins; otherwise, there are even non-Muslims who claim to be seeking God and undertake stupendous labours to attain this end. The Holy Qur'ān has, therefore, defined the straight path so explicitly from a positive as well as eliminative point of view.

The Key to the Straight Path

But, before we proceed, there is another problem to be considered, the answer to which would open the door to a new and more comprehensive understanding. It would seem that in order to define the straight path it should have been sufficient to call it 'the path of the Prophet' صلى الله عليه وسلم or 'the path of the Qur'ān', which should also have been more succinct and more explicit, for the whole of the Holy Qur'ān is really an explanation of the straight path, and the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, an elaboration. But, setting aside the succinct and explicit form of expression, the Holy Qur'ān has taken up two verses of this short Sūrah for defining and delimiting the straight path positively and negatively, and has thus indicated that if one wishes to follow the straight path, one should seek such and such men 'those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace...', and adopt their way. Here, the Holy Qur'ān does not ask us to follow the 'path of the Qur'ān', for a book alone is not sufficient for the grooming of man; nor does it ask us to follow 'the path of the prophet', for the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not to be in this world for ever, and no other prophet was to come after him. So, in enumerating those whose teaching and example can help us attain the straight path, the Holy Qur'ān has, besides the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, included those too, who will always be found living amongst us till the last day of the world -- namely, the

Siddiqin, the *Shuhadā'*, and the righteous.

For the purpose of indicating the manner in which one can find the straight path, the Holy Qur'ān has thus referred not to a book but to certain men. According to a *ḥadīth*, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ informed his Companions that, like earlier communities, his *'Ummah'* too would be divided into seventy or seventy-two sects, and that only one among them would be on the right path, they wanted to know as to which group it would be. The answer he gave also leads on to certain men of Allah, for he said: مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي (That which follows my way and the way of my Companions). All this comes to mean that written books or oral traditions alone cannot teach, train and discipline man; for this, one has to be with knowing men, and learning from them. In yet other words, the real teacher and groomer of man has to be another man; a book cannot take that place all by itself. How curtly this was pointed out by Akbar, the famous Urdu poet-humourist, who said:

کورس تو لفظ ہی سکھاتے ہیں
آدمی، آدمی بناتے ہیں

which, in English, comes close to saying: "Courses teach words. But, men train men." This truth holds good even for spheres of everyday life.

No one has ever become a doctor, or an engineer, or even a cook or a tailor merely by reading a book. Similarly, studying the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* on one's own cannot by itself be sufficient for the moral-spiritual education and training of a man; such a study must be carried on under the guidance of a specialist or a genuine scholar before it can be useful. It is common observation that,[9] many people today, though otherwise educated, cherish the erroneous notion that one can acquire a masterly knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān and *Hadīth* merely by reading a translation or at best a commentary.[10] But the error of such an enterprise is self-evident. Had a book in itself been sufficient for the guidance of men, there was no need for the prophets to be sent. But, Allah in sending us His Book, has also sent His Prophet to serve as a teacher and guide. In defining the straight path

9. Under the influence of the West, particularly that of Protestantism.

10. The illusion has been encouraged by the modernistic or pseudo-modernistic interpretations of Islam.

too, He has also enumerated those of His servants who find special favour with Him -- all of which argues that, in trying to understand the Book of Allah and to act upon it, one cannot solely rely on one's own study and judgment, but must turn to someone who knows.

The conclusion

Two things are necessary for the physical and spiritual well-being and success of man -- the Book of Allah which contains guidance for every sphere of human life, and the Men of Allah who help in making this guidance effective. The way to profit from the Men of Allah is to assess them according to the well-known principles of the Book of Allah. Those who do not conform to these principles should just not be regarded as Men of Allah. But, when one has found Men of Allah, in the real sense, one should seek their guidance in order to understand the meaning of the Book of Allah and act upon it.

Why the Schism?

As to the sectarian differences on this point, we may remark that there are two kinds of deviations in this respect. Some people elected to follow the Book of Allah alone, ignored the Men of Allah totally and gave no value to their teachings and explanations. Conversely, others adopted the Men of Allah as the only criterion of truth and became indifferent to the Book of Allah. Both these ways lead to fatal error.

Injunctions and related considerations

To recapitulate, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah begins with the praise of Allah. Then comes an affirmation on the part of man that he worships Allāh alone, and turns to him alone in the hour of need. That is, so to say, the oath of allegiance man offers to his Lord and Master. Finally, there is a prayer which covers all possible human needs and goals. Beside these, there are some related secondary considerations also which arise from the Sūrah. These are as follows:

The proper way of Praying to Allah

Through this particular mode of expression and through its structure, the Sūrah teaches man how to pray and how to make a request to Allah. The proper method is that one should begin by fulfilling one's obligation to praise Allah. Then, one should offer the pledge of complete allegiance to Allah to the effect that one does not regard anyone except Allah as being worthy of adoration and worship,

nor does one look upon anyone except Allah as having the real power to give help in one's distress or need. Finally, one should pray for what one wishes to have. And there is every hope that a prayer made in this manner will be granted. (See Ahkam al-Jaṣṣāṣ). The Sūrah also suggests that, in praying to Allah, one should pray for something so comprehensive that it includes in essence all possible human goals, for example, pray for being guided in the straight path, because if one can and does follow the straight path in everything that concerns this world or the other, one's material life or spiritual, one need not be afraid of stumbling or of being hurt.

Praising Allah is Man's Natural Demand

The first verse of the Surah teaches man to praise Allah. We praise someone either for a quality inherent in him or for a favour received from him. But the verse mentions neither. The implication is that the blessings of Allah are limitless. The Holy Qur'an says: وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا (If you try to count the blessings of Allah, you will never be able to number them) (14:34 and 16:18). Leaving aside other things, if man only considers his own being, he would find that it is a microcosm -- in itself which contains in analogical form everything contained in the macrocosm, his body offers a parallel to the earth, the hair on it to the vegetation, his bones to the hills, his veins flowing with blood to the springs underground.[11]

Man, again, is composed of two parts, spirit and body, of which the spirit is obviously superior in value, while the body is subservient to it. In this inferior part alone, there are thousands of anatomical and biological wonders. There are supposed to be more than three hundred joints, but Allah has made each of them so strong that during the sixty or seventy years of an average man's life, they are in perpetual motion and yet do not need repairs. Of this Allah himself has reminded us:

11. It may not be out of place to remark that this analogical view of man's relationship with the universe has been an essential feature of all traditional cosmologies. The Copernican cosmology, whatever its merits may otherwise be, has tended to dissolve this vision of things, leaving man, at least in the West, to grow more and more alienated from the universe -- till we have arrived at the viewers of the American television who are reported to have been more interested in a ball game than in man's first landing on the moon -- Translator

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰهُمْ وَ شَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ

It is We Who created them, and it is We Who endowed their joints with strength (76:28).

Or, take the example of the eye. One may spend a life-time and yet not fully know the manifestations of divine wisdom present in it. Or, take a single movement of the eye, and see how many blessings of Allah are involved in its functioning. Before the eye can see, internally it requires physical energy which in its turn is provided by food, air, water etc. And externally it requires the light of the sun which in its turn depends on a thousand other factors. That is to say, all the forces of the universe join together to make it possible for the eye to see even once. Now, try to calculate how many times does the eye see in a day, in a year, in a man's life-time. Similarly, the functions of the ears, the tongue, the hands and the feet, each brings into action the forces of the whole universe.

This is a kind of blessing which is equally available to every living man, be he a king or a beggar. In fact, all the greatest blessings of Allah are the common property of every living creature -- for example, air, water, light, the sun, the moon, the stars, in fact, everything that exists in the heavens and the earth, or between them, offers its benefits to all without distinction.

Then there are special blessings which divine wisdom has chosen to distribute unequally among men, some getting more and others less. This category includes wealth, honour, health, peace, knowledge and other acquisitions. Although the general blessings are obviously much more important and essential for human life than the special blessings, yet man in his naivete takes them for granted and never realizes what great gifts they are in spite of being common.

Now, human nature itself requires that in recognition of the innumerable blessings that keep descending on him at every moment of his life, man should, as far as he can, praise and continue to praise his Benefactor. It is to indicate this basic need of human nature that the Holy Qur'ān employs the word اَلْحَمْدُ : '*Al-ḥamd*' (Praise) as the first word of the very first Sūrah. Thus, the praise of Allah has been accorded a very high rank among the acts of worship. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has

said that when, on receiving some kind of a blessing from Allah, His servant says اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰہِ: (Praise belongs to Allah), it is like giving something better in return for what he has taken (Qurṭubī, from Ibn Majah, as narrated by Anas رضی اللہ عنہ). According to another *ḥadīth* if a man, on receiving all possible blessings of the world, says: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰہِ (*Al-ḥamdulillāh*), his act is superior to all those blessings. Commenting on this *ḥadīth* and citing certain scholars, al-Qurṭubī says, the ability to repeat the phrase '*Al-ḥamdulillāh*' with one's tongue is in itself a blessing of Allah. According to another authentic *ḥadīth*, saying this phrase fills half the scale on the side of good deeds in the Balance. As to what praising Allah should actually mean, Shaqiq ibn Ibrāhīm explains that when one receives some gift from Allah, one should first of all recognize the Benefactor, then be content with what He has given, and finally never disobey Him as long as one has some strength left in the body, which again is a gift from Allah. (See Qurṭubī)

The second element in the phrase is *Lillah*, which is composed of the preposition *Lām* (Arabic equivalent of the letter L) and the noun 'Allah'. This preposition means 'for' and is used for particularization, showing the exclusive possession of a thing or quality. So, the phrase implies that not only is it the duty of man to praise Allah, but in reality all praise belongs exclusively to Him, and no one else in the universe is worthy of it. At the same time, and by way of a further blessing, Allah has, for the purpose of teaching man how to behave with his fellow beings, commanded him to thank those too through whom the gifts of Allah come to him, for one who does not see the need of thanking his human benefactor would not thank Allah too.

Self-Praise is not permitted

It is not permissible for a created being such as man to praise himself. The Holy Qur'ān says: فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ Do not pretend to be pure; He knows best who is really God-fearing) (53:32). That is to say, a man can be praised only if he fears Allah, but Allah alone knows to what degree a particular man possesses this quality, known as *Taqwā*. As for Allah praising Himself, the reason is that man is not capable of praising the glory and greatness of Allah in a befitting manner. Not to speak of others, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has

exclaimed: لَا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ (I cannot properly praise You!). Therefore, Allah Himself has taught man the mode of praising Him.

Rabb is the exclusive attribute of Allah

The Arabic word '*Rabb*' (Lord) is applied to a person who not only possesses a certain thing, but is also fully capable of and responsible for nurturing it properly. Obviously, no one can act as '*Rabb*' with regard to the whole universe except Allah. So, the word, used in an absolute sense, is exclusive to Allah, and it is not permissible to address or describe anyone other than Allah as '*Rabb.*' A *ḥādīth* in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim explicitly forbids a slave or servant to call his master a '*Rabb*'. The word may, however, be employed in the case of a man too in a relative sense -- that is, in relation to a particular thing, for example, '*rabb al-dar*' (master of the house) etc. (Qurṭubī).

Seeking help from Allah

According to the great commentator and Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the verse إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ : 'You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help' means that one worships Allah alone and no one else, and that one turns for help to Allah alone and to no one else. (Ibn Abī Hātim, Ibn Jarīr)

It has been reported from certain great scholars and saints of the earliest centuries of Islam that the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah is the secret (i.e., the gist) of the entire Holy Qur'ān, and this verse is the secret of the whole Sūrah, for the first sentence of the verse is a declaration of one's being free from *Shirk*, or from all desire to associate anyone with Allah, and the second sentence is an expression of one's being exempt from all wish to trust in one's own power and will. Such an affirmation would naturally lead to putting oneself in the hands of Allah in all concerns. The Holy Qur'ān again and again commands us to do so: فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ :'Worship Him, and put your trust in Him'. (11:123); قل هو الرحمن اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا :'Say He is the All-Merciful. We believe in Him, and we put all our trust in Him' (67:29); 0 رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا :'He is the Lord of the East and the West; there is no god but He; so take Him for a guardian' (73:9). All these verses come to mean simply this -- a true Muslim should, in anything that he undertakes, rely neither on his own faculties nor on the help of a fellow creature, but should entrust himself completely to Allah, for He alone is All-Powerful, and He alone is the absolute helper.

Two doctrinal points emerge from this discussion. Firstly, it is totally forbidden to worship anyone except Allah, and associating anyone else with Him in worship is a deadly and unforgiveable sin. As we have already explained, *'Ibādah* (worship) signifies an utmost humility and willing self-abasement before someone out of the deepest love and veneration. If one behaves in this manner in relation to any created being, it is called *shirk* (association) in Islamic terminology. It basically follows from this definition of "worship" that "association" does not merely consist in attributing divine power to figures made out of stone or metal as idolators usually do; but obeying or loving or venerating someone to the degree which is reserved for Allah is also an "obvious association" (*al-shirk al-Jalii*). In recounting how the Jews and the Christians indulge in *shirk* (association), the Holy Qur'ān says: اِتَّخَذُوٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ : 'They have taken their religious scholars and their monks as lords apart from Allah'. (9:31)

The Companion 'Adī Ibn Ḥatim, who was a Christian before accepting Islam, asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ with reference to this verse as to why the Holy Qur'ān should blame the Christians for having taken their religious scholars as lords when they were never guilty of worshipping them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ in his turn asked him if it was not a fact that their scholars had declared many things as forbidden although Allah had permitted men to eat them, and that conversely they had declared as permissible what had been forbidden, and that the Christians obeyed their scholars in both the respects. 'Adī admitted that it was so. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ remarked that this was exactly how they 'worshipped' their scholars. This goes to prove that Allah alone has the right to establish what is permissible and what is forbidden. If one associates somebody else with Allah in this respect and, in spite of being familiar with the divine injunctions regarding what is permissible (*ḥalāl*) and what is forbidden (*haram*), goes against them, believing that someone other than Allah too can demand obedience in these matters, one is virtually worshipping him and being guilty of the sin of association (*shirk*). But, in order to guard against a possible misunderstanding, we may remark that this verse of the Holy Qur'ān, which condemns the worship of religious scholars, does in no way apply to the generality of Muslims who, not being

qualified to understand the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* by themselves or to deduce the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* from them, naturally depend on an *Imām*, a *Mujtāhid*, a *Muftī* or a religious scholar and follow his instructions in these matters. In fact, such Muslims are only acting in accordance with the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and obeying divine commandments. For the Holy Qur'ān itself says:

فَاسْئَلُوْٓا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

Ask the men of knowledge, if you yourselves do not know. (16:43)

Another thing which comes under the category of association (*shirk*) is to make votive offerings to someone other than Allah; so does praying to someone else in time of need or distress, for, according to a Tradition (*Ḥadīth*), praying is also an act of worship. Similarly, adopting such practices as are in general considered to be the signs or symbols of association also constitute the same sin. For example, the Companion 'Adī ibn Ḥatīm رضی الله عنه relates that when he embraced Islam and presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ with a cross hanging round his neck, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him to remove this idol. Although at this time the cross did not have the kind of signification for 'Adī which it has for Christians, yet he was asked to shun a symbol of 'association' externally as well. Among the symbols of 'association' are included practices like bowing (*rukū'*) or prostrating (*sajdah*) oneself before anyone except Allah, or going round a person or thing in the prescribed manner of the *tawāf* (circumambulation) of the *Ka'bāh*. Avoiding all such symbols of 'association' is a necessary part of the pledge of fidelity to Allah made in the phrase: 'You alone we worship'.

Seeking Allah's Help Directly and Indirectly

The other doctrinal point we mentioned is that one must turn to Allah alone for help and to no one else. This requires some clarification.

There is a kind of help which every man does seek from other men. The physical aspect of the universal order being what it is, it has to be so, and not otherwise. A tailor or tinker, a carpenter or a blacksmith, each is serving others, and everyone is obliged to seek his help. Seeking help of this kind neither is nor can be forbidden by any

religion, for it is part and parcel of the network of physical means provided to men by Allah. In the sphere of non-physical means too, it is quite permissible for one to seek the help of a prophet or a saint by asking him to pray to Allah in one's behalf, or to mention, while praying directly to Allah, the name of a prophet or a saint by way of a medium (*wasilāh*) for drawing divine mercy upon oneself. Explicit Traditions (*aḥādīth*) and implicit indications of the Holy Qur'ān fully justify this practice, and it would be wrong to condemn it as being forbidden or to include it among the various forms of association (*shirk*).

Now, what sort of supplication for help is it which can be addressed exclusively to Allah and to no one else? And, when does one fall into the sin of *shirk* (association) in asking someone other than Allah for help? In reply to the second question, we may say that in this context the sin of *shirk* or association arises in two forms. Firstly, one becomes guilty of association, if one seeks the help of an angel or prophet or saint or any creature believing him to be omnipotent like Allah. It is such an obvious heresy that even idolaters and associators in general consider it as such, for even they do not look upon their idols and gods as being omnipotent like Allah. The second is the form adopted by idolaters and associators. They admit that God alone is Omnipotent, but also believe that He has delegated a part of His power to an angel or a prophet or a saint or to a smaller god who exercises a full and independent authority in that area, and to whom one may pray for help in matters within his jurisdiction. This is the supplication which the Holy Qur'ān forbids, and against which it warns us in the phrase إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (to You alone we pray for help).

There is a simple reason for misunderstanding in this regard. Allah appoints many angels to perform quite a large number of functions even in the physical order of the universe; or, He makes many things happen through the prophets which are beyond the powers of man and which are called miracles (*mu'jizat*), as also other incredible wonders through the saints which are called *karāmat*. The appearance may easily lead a careless observer to ignore the reality, and to conclude from what he has seen that the angels or the prophets or the saints could not have worked such wonders if Allah had not

given them the necessary power and authority. This faulty argument which is no more than an illusion gives birth to the belief that the prophets or the saints enjoy absolute power and authority in their own degree. It is not so. Miracles and wonders are the direct acts of Allah, but they are manifested through prophets and saints so that people may recognize their spiritual station -- prophets and saints themselves have no powers to make such things happen. This fact is borne out by so many verses of the Holy Qur'ān. For example, the verse: وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ : 'When you threw, it was not you that threw, but Allah threw' (8:17) refers to a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he threw a handful of pebbles at an army of his enemies, and Allah willed it so that they smote the eyes of the whole army. The Holy Qur'ān attributes the act of throwing pebbles, not to the Holy Prophet ﷺ but to Allah Himself, which clearly shows that a miracle is manifested through a prophet ﷺ , but is in reality an act of Allah Himself. Similarly, when the people of Nūḥ, or Noah, علیه السلام demanded that, in order to establish his authenticity as a prophet, he should bring down on them the punishment and wrath of Allah, he replied: إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ اللَّهُ إِن شَاءَ :'Allah will certainly bring it down to you, if He so wills' (11:33), in other words, he declared that he himself could not bring down divine punishment on them by way of a miracle. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān reports what a group of prophets said to their people in reply to a similar demand: مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَن نَّأْتِيَكُم بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ :'We cannot give you proof, except by Allah's will' (14:11). This again was an admission that it was not in their power to produce a miracle, for all power rests in the hands of Allah. In short, it is not at all possible for a prophet or a saint to show a miracle whenever he likes and whatsoever he likes. The disbelievers used to demand specific miracles from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and from the earlier prophets علیهم السلام but Allah manifested only those which He Himself pleased, and not others. The Holy Qur'ān presents many such instances.

An ordinary example will make the discussion clear. In your room, you receive light from a lamp and air from a fan, but the lamp and the fan do not possess in themselves an absolute power to give you light and air, but need the electric current which they receive from the power house, and without which they cannot function. Giving you light

and air is, in actual fact, not the work of the lamp and the fan, but of the electric current which comes from the power house. Similarly, saints, prophets and angels, all depend on Allah in everything they do; it is Allah's power and will which makes things happen, though it manifests itself through prophets and saints as the electric current manifests itself through fans and lamps.

This example would also show that although prophets and saints have no power to make these things happen or come to be, yet their presence is not altogether irrevelant to what happens, you cannot have light and air in your room without there being a lamp and a fan. Likewise, you cannot have miracles or wonders without there being a prophet or a saint. There is, of course, a certain difference between the two situations. In spite of all the wirings and fittings being intact, you cannot have light without a lamp, nor air without a fan. But, in the case of miracles, Allah has the power, if He so wills, to manifest them even without the medium of prophets and saints. The usual way of Allah has, however, been that miracles are not manifested without the medium of prophets and saints; otherwise miracles would not serve the purpose for which they are intended.

To conclude, one must have firm faith in the doctrine that everything that happens is made to happen by the power and will of Allah, but it is also necessary to recognize the need for prophets and saints, and to admit their importance. Without such an admission, one would succeed neither in obeying divine commandments in the real sense nor in attaining Allah's pleasure exactly like the man who, being ignorant of the worth of lamps and fans, disregards them, and remains deprived of light and air.

The problems we have discussed above perplex many a mind. But the answer is essentially simple. Taking prophets and saints as a medium (*wasilāh*) for drawing divine mercy upon oneself is neither absolutely permissible nor absolutely forbidden. There is a condition attached to it. If one does so, believing a prophet or a saint to be all-powerful, it becomes an act of ***shirk*** (association) and is hence forbidden. But if one takes a prophet or a saint to be no more than a medium or a means, it is permissible. But one finds that in this matter people generally adopt either of the two extreme positions, outright

rejection of *wasilāh* or exaggerated veneration. The truth, however, lies between the two.

6. Success in this world and in the Hereafter

As we have said before, the prayer which the Holy Qur'ān has chosen to recommend to everyone, in every situation and for everything one does, is the prayer for being guided in the straight path. Just as success in the Hereafter depends on taking the straight path which leads one to Paradise, in the same way, if you come to think about it, success in all worldly concerns too depends on keeping to the straight path -- that is, on using the means and methods which habitually lead to the attainment of one's goal. Conversely, a little reflection will reveal that failure is always due to having strayed from the straight path. In view of the need for the straight path in worldly and other worldly concerns both, this is the prayer which should constantly be on the lips and in the heart of a true Muslim -- never as an empty verbal exercise, but with a sincere intention and with the meaning of the words fully present in the mind.

With Allah's help, the commentary on Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah ends here.

SŪRAH AL-BAQARAH

(The Cow)

MADINITE	بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ	286 VERSES

The name and the number of verses

According to the *ahadith* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the reports relating to his blessed Companions, the name of this Sūrah is Al-Baqarah. The *riwayah* or narration which prohibits this name is not authentic (Ibn Kathir). It comprises of 286 verses, 6201 words and 25500 letters (Ibn Kathir).

The period of revelation

The Sūrah is Madinite - that is to say, it was revealed at Madīnah after the Hijrah; some of the verses included here were revealed at Makkah at the time of the last Hajj of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but, in accordance with the terminology of the commentators, they too are regarded as Madinite. This is the longest Sūrah in the Holy Qur'ān. It was the first Sūrah to be revealed at Madīnah, but different verses were revealed at different times, covering quite a long period so much so that the verses with regard to *riba* (interest or usury) were revealed in the last days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the conquest of Makkah. Actually, the verse:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللّٰهِ

Fear the day when you will return to Allah (2:281),

is the very last verse of the Holy Qur'ān to be revealed - this happened on the 10th of Dhu al-Hijjah 10 A.H., when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was

in the course of performing his last Hajj, and only eighty or ninety days later he departed from this world, and the process of Divine Revelation came to an end for ever. (Qurtubi)

The merits of Sūrah Al-Baqarah

It is not only the longest Sūrah in the Holy Qur'ān, but also contains quite a large number of injunctions. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "Make a habit of reading the Sūrah Al-Baqarah, for reading it brings down on you the *barakah* or blessings of Allah, and neglecting it is a matter of regret, and a misfortune. And men of falsehood cannot overcome it". Al-Qurṭubī cites the blessed Companion Mu'awiyah to the effect that the men of falsehood referred to here are sorcerers, and the implication is that one who keeps reading this Surah becomes immune to the effect of black magic (Qurṭubī, from Muslim, as narrated by Abū Umamah Bahili). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said that Satan flees from the house in which this Surah is read or recited. (Ibn Kathir from Hakim). Another *ḥadīth* says that this Sūrah is the apex of the Holy Qur'ān, and that a retinue of eighty angels had accompanied each of its verses when it was revealed (Ibn Kathīr from Musnad Ahmad). The blessed Companion Abū Huraira رضى الله عنه reports from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that there is a verse in this Sūrah which enjoys a superiority over all the other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and that verse is the Verse of the *Kursi* (*Āyaṭ al-Kursī* 2:255) (Ibn Kathīr from Tirmidhī). The blessed Companion Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd says that ten verses of this Sūrah have such an efficacy that if one recites them at night, neither Satan nor *jinn* would enter one's house, nor would one and one's family be affticted with illness or calamity or sorrow that night, and that if they are recited over a man suffering from a fit of madness, his condition will improve. The ten verses are these: the first four verses of the Sūrah, three verses in the middle (that is, the *Āyaṭ al-Kursī*, and the two following verses), and the last three verses of the Sūrah.

This Sūrah enjoys, with regard to its contents as well, a special distinction. Ibn al-'Arabī reports from his elders that in this Sūrah there are one thousand injunctions, one thousand prohibitions, one thousand subtle points of wisdom, and one thousand parables and references to historical events (Qurṭubī and Ibn Kathīr). That is why the

great Caliph 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ spent twelve years in learning and meditating over this Sūrah, and the blessed Companion Abdullāh ibn 'Umar spent eight years to learn it. (Qurṭubi)

As we have said, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is the gist and the essence of the Holy Qur'ān. It deals with three basic themes - firstly, the affirmation of Allah as the Lord (*Rabb*) of the universe; secondly, the affirmation that Allah alone, and none else, is worthy of being worshipped; thirdly, the prayer for guidance. Thus, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah ends with the request for the straight path, and the whole of the Qur'ān is, in fact, an answer to this request - that is to say, the man who seeks the straight path will find it only in the Holy Qur'ān.

Hence it is that the Sūrah Al-Fātihah is immediately followed by the Sūrah Al-Baqarah which begins with the words, "That is the Book", indicating that this book is the straight path one has been seeking and praying for. Having defined the nature and function of the Holy Qur'ān, the Sūrah proceeds to state in a very brief manner the basic principles of the Islamic faith - namely, oneness of God, prophethood and hereafter (*Tawḥīd, Risālah, Ākhirah*). These principles have been presented in detail at the end of the Surah. In between, the Sūrah lays down the basic principles, and sometime even secondary rules in detail, for providing guidance to man in all spheres of life, modes of *'ibādah* (worship), ethics, individual and social behaviour, economic relationships, ways and means of improving oneself externally and internally.

Verses 1 - 5

الٓمّٓ O ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ ۛ فِيْهِ ۛ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ O الَّذِيْنَ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ O
وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْاٰخِرَةِ
هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ O اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ O

With the name of Allah,
The All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Alif. Lam. Mim. That Book has no doubt in it - a

guidance for the God-fearing, who believe in the unseen, and are steadfast in *salah*, and spend out of what We have provided them; and who believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you, and do have faith in the Hereafter. It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord; and it is just these who are successful. (Verses 1-5)

The Sūrah begins with the Arabic letters *Alif*, *Lām* and *Mīm* (equivalents of A, L and M). Several Sūrahs begin with a similar combination of letters, for example, *Ḥā, Mīm,* or *Alif, Lām, Mīm, Ṣād.* Each of these letters is pronounced separately without the addition of a vowel sound after it. So, the technical term for them is مُقَطَّعَات (*Muqatta'āt*: isolated letters).

According to certain commentators, the isolated letters are the names of the Surahs at the beginning of which they occur. According to others, they are the symbols of the Divine Names. But the majority of the blessed Companions and the generation next to them, the *Tabi'īn*, and also the later authoritative scholars have preferred the view that the isolated letters are symbols or mysteries, the meaning of which is known to Allah alone or may have been entrusted as a special secret to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to be communicated to anyone else. That is why no commentary or explanation of these letters has at all been reported from him. The great commentator Al-Qurṭubī has adopted this view of the matter, which is summarized below:

"According to 'Amir Āl-Sha'bī, Sufyān Al-Thawrī and many masters of the science of *Ḥadīth*, every revealed book contains certain secret signs and symbols and mysteries of Allah; the isolated letters too are the secrets of Allah in the Holy Qur'ān, and hence they are among the مُتَشَابِهَات (*Mutashābihāt*: of hidden meaning), the meaning of which is known to Allah alone, and it is not permissible for us even to enter into any discussion with regard to them. The isolated letters are not, however, without some benefit to us. Firstly, to believe in them and to recite them is in itself a great merit. Secondly, in reciting them we receive spiritual blessings from the unseen world, even if we are not aware of the fact. Al-Qurṭubī adds: "The Blessed Caliphs Abū

Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Ali, and most of the Companions like 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله تعالى عنه, firmly held the view that these letters are the secrets of Allah, that we should believe in them as having descended from Allah and recite them exactly in the form in which they have descended, but should not be inquisitive about their meanings, which would be improper". Citing Al-Qurṭubī and others, Ibn Kathīr too prefers this view. On the other hand, interpretations of the isolated letters have been reported from great and authentic scholars. Their purpose, however, was only to provide symbolical interpretation, or to awaken the minds of the readers to the indefinite possibilities of meanings that lie hidden in the Holy Qur'ān, or just to simplify things; they never wished to claim that these were the meanings intended by Allah Himself. Therefore, it would not be justifiable to challenge such efforts at interpretation since it would go against the considered judgment of veritable scholars.

The sentence "That Book has no doubt in it" raises a grammatical and exegetical problem, for the first phrase in the Arabic text reads as "ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ" :*Dhālikal kitāb*. Now, the word *dhālika* (that) is used to point out a distant thing, while the word *kitāb* (book) obviously refers to the Holy Qur'ān itself, which is present before us. So, this particular demonstrative pronoun does not seem to be appropriate to the situation. There is, however, a subtle indication. The pronoun refers back to the prayer for the straight path made in the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, implying that the prayer has been granted and the Holy Qur'ān is the answer to the request, which gives a detailed account of the straight path to those who seek guidance and are willing to follow it.

Having indicated this, the Holy Qur'ān makes a claim about itself: "There is no doubt in it". There are two ways in which doubt or suspicion may arise with regard to the validity or authenticity of statement. Either the statement itself is erroneous, and thus becomes subject to doubt; or, the listener makes a mistake in understanding it. In the latter case, the statement does not really become subject to doubt, even if someone comes to suspect it out of a defective or distorted understanding - as the Holy Qur'ān itself reminds us later in

the same Sūrah: إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ :"If you are in doubt..." (2:23). So, in spite of the doubts and objections of a thousand men of small or perverse understanding, it would still be true to say that there is no doubt in this book - either with regard to it having been revealed by Allah, or with regard to its contents.

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ :"A guidance for the God-fearing": The Arabic word for the God-fearing is *Muttaqīn*, derived from *Taqwā* which literally means "to fear, to refrain from", and in Islamic terminology it signifies fearing Allah and refraining from the transgression of His commandments. As for the Holy Qur'ān being a guidance to the God-fearing, it actually means that although the Holy Qur'ān provides guidance not only to mankind but to all existents in the universe, yet the special guidance which is the means of salvation in the other world is reserved for the God-fearing alone. We have already explained in the commentary on the Sūrah "Al-Fātiḥah" that there are three degrees of divine guidance - the first degree being common to the whole of mankind and even to animals etc., the second being particular to men and *jinns*, and the third being special to those who are close to Allah and have found His favour, the different levels of this last degree being limitless. It is the last two degrees of guidance which are intended in the verse under discussion. With regard to the second degree, the implication is that those who accept the guidance will have the hope of being elevated to the rank of the God-fearing. With reference to the third degree, the suggestion is that those who are already God-fearing may receive further and limitless guidance through the Holy Qur'ān. This explanation should be sufficient to remove the objection that guidance is needed much more by those who are not God-fearing, for now we know that the specification of the God-fearing does not entail a denial of guidance to those who not possess this qualification.

The next two verses delineate the characteristic qualities of the God-fearing, suggesting that these are the people who have received guidance, whose path is the straight path, and that he who seeks the straight path should join their company, adopt their beliefs and their

way of life. It is perhaps in order to enforce this suggestion that the Holy Qur'ān, immediately after pointing out the attributes peculiar to the God-fearing, proceeds to say:

أُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ٥

It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord, and it is just these who are successful.

The delineation of the qualities of the God-fearing in these two verses also contains, in essence, a definition of Faith (*'Imān*) and an account of its basic tenets and of the fundamental principles of righteous conduct:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ٥

Who believe in the unseen, and are steadfast in *Salah* and spend out of what We have provided them.

Thus, the first of the two verses, mentions three qualities of the God-fearing - belief in the unseen, being steadfast in *Salāh*, and spending in the way of Allah. Many important considerations arise out of this verse, the most significant being the meaning and definition of *'Īmān* (Faith).

Who are the God-fearing

The Definition of *'Imān*

The Holy Qur'ān has provided a comprehensive defination of *'Iman* in only two words يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ "Believe in the unseen". If one has fully understood the meaning of the words *'Īmān* and *Ghayb*, one will have also understood the essential reality of *'Īmān*.

Lexically, the Arabic word *'Īmān* signifies accepting with complete certitude the statement made by someone out of one's total confidence and trust in him. Endorsing someone's statement with regard to sensible or observable facts is, therefore, not *'Īmān*. For example, if one man describes a piece of cloth as black, and another man endorses the statement, it may be called *Taṣdīq* (confirmation) but not *'Īmān*, for such an endorsement is based on personal observation, and does, in no way, involve any confidence or trust in the man who has made the statement. In the terminology of the *Sharī'ah*, *'Īmān* signifies accepting with complete certitude the statement made by a prophet

only out of one's total confidence and trust in him and without the need of personal observation.[1]

As for the word *Ghaib*, lexically it denotes things which are not known to man in an evident manner, or which are not apprehensible through the five senses. The Holy Qur'ān uses this word to indicate all the things which we cannot know through the five senses or through reason, but which have been reported to us by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . These include the essence and the attributes of Allah, matters pertaining to destiny, heaven and hell and what they contain, the Day of Judgment and the things which happen on that Day, divine books, all the prophets who have preceded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in short, all the things mentioned in the last two verses of the Sūrah Al-Baqarah. Thus, the third verse of the Sūrah states the basic creed of the Islamic faith in its essence, while the last two verses provide the details.

So, belief in the unseen ultimately comes to mean having firm faith in everything that the Holy Prophet has taught us - subject to the necessary condition that the teaching in question must have come down to us through authentic and undeniable sources. This is how the overwhelming majority of Muslim scholars generally define *'Iman* (See al-'Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah, 'Aqa'id al-Nasafi etc.).

According to this definition, *'Imān* signifies faith and certitude, and not mere knowledge. For, a mental knowledge of the truth is possessed by Satan himself, and even by many disbelievers - for example, they knew very well that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was truthful and that his teachings were true, but they did not have faith in him nor did they accept his teachings with their heart, and hence they are not Muslims.

The Meaning of 'Establishing' *Salāh*

2. The second quality of the God-fearing is that they are "steadfast in the prayer." The verb employed by the Holy Qur'ān here is

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1. It would be helpful to note that in the everday idiom of the West, and even in modern social sciences, "faith" has come to mean no more than an intense emotional state or "a fixe emotion". As against this, the Islamic conception of *'Imān* is essentially intellectual, in the original signification of "Intellect" which the modern West has altogether forgotten.

Yuqīmūna (generally rendered in English translations as "they establish", which comes from the word *Iqamah* signifying "to straighten out"). So, the verb implies not merely saying one's prayers, but performing the prayers correctly in all possible ways and observing all the prescribed conditions, whether obligatory (*Farḍ*) or necessary (*Wājib*) or commendable (*Mustahabb*). The concept includes regularity and perpetuity in the performance of *Ṣalāh* as also an inward concentration, humility and awe. At this point, it may be noted that the term does not mean a particular *ṣalāh*, instead, it includes all *farḍ*, *wājib* and *nafl* prayers.

Now to sum up - the God-fearing are those who offer their prayers regularly and steadfastly in accordance with the regulations of the Sharī'ah, and also observe the spiritual etiquette outwardly and inwardly.

Spending in the way of Allah: Categories

The third quality of the God-fearing is that they spend in the way of Allah. The correct position in this respect, which has been adopted by the majority of commentators, is that it includes all the forms of spending in the way of Allah, whether it be the *farḍ* (obligatory) *Zakāh* or the *Wājib* (necessary) alms-giving or just voluntary and *nafl* (supererogatory) acts of charity. For, the Holy Qur'an usually employs the word *Infaq* with reference to *nafl* (suspererogatory) alms-giving or in a general sense, but reserves the word *Zakāh* for the obligatory alms-giving. The simple phrase: مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ : "Spend out of what We have provided them" inspires us to spend in the way of Allah by drawing our attention to the fact that anything and everything we possess is a gift from Allah and His trust in our hands, and that even if we spend all our possessions in the way of Allah, it would be proper and just and no favour to Him. But Allah in His mercy asks us to spend in His way "out of" what (مِمَّا) he has provided - that is, only a part and not the whole.

Among the three qualities of the God-fearing, faith is, of course, the most important, for it is the basic principle of all other principles, and no good deed can find acceptance or validity without faith. The other two qualities pertain to good deeds. Now, good deeds are many; one could make a long list of even those which are either obligatory or

necessary. So, the question arises as to why the Holy Qur'ān should be content to choose for mention only two - namely, performing *Ṣalāh* and spending in the way of Allah. In answering this question, one could say that all the good deeds which are obligatory or necessary for man pertain either to his person and his body or to his possessions. Among the personal and bodily forms of *'Ibādat* (acts of worship), the most important is the *Ṣalah*. Hence the Holy Qur'an mentions only this form in the present passage. As for the different forms of *'Ibadat* pertaining to possessions, the word *Infaq* (spending) covers all of them. Thus, in mentioning only two good deeds, the Holy Qur'ān has by implication included all the forms of worship and all good deeds. The whole verse, then, comes to mean that the God-fearing are those who are perfect in their faith and in their deeds both, and that Islam is the sum of faith and practice. In other words, while providing a complete definition of *'Īmān* (Faith), the verse indicates the meaning of Islam as well. So, let us find out how *'Īmān* and Islam are distinct from each other.

The distinction between *'Īmān* and Islam

Lexically, *'Īmān* signifies the acceptance and confirmation of something with one's heart, while Islam signifies obedience and submission. *'Īmān* pertains to the heart; so does Islam, but it is related to all the other parts of the human body as well. From the point of view of the Shari'ah, however, *'Īmān* is not valid without Islam, nor Islam without *'Īmān*. In other words, it is not enough to have faith in Allah and the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in one's heart unless the tongue expresses the faith and also affirms one's allegiance and submission. Similarly, an oral declaration of faith and allegiance is not valid unless one has faith in one's heart.

In short, *'Īmān*, and Islam have different connotations from the lexical point of view. It is on the basis of this lexical distinction that the Holy Qur'ān and Ḥadīth refer to a difference between the two. From the point of view of the *Sharī'ah*, however, the two are inextricably linked together, and one cannot be valid without the other - as is borne out by the Holy Qur'ān itself.

When Islam, or an external declaration of allegiance, is not

accompanied by *'Imān* or internal faith, the Holy Qur'ān terms it as *Nifāq* (hypocrisy), and condemns it as a greater crime than an open rejection of Islam:

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِى الدَّرْكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ

Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell. (4:145)

In explanation of this verse let us add that so far as the physical world goes, we can only be sure of the external state of a man, and cannot know his internal state with any degree of certainty. So in the case of men who orally declare themselves to be Muslims without having faith in their heart, the Sharī'ah requires us to deal with them as we would deal with a Muslim in worldly affairs; but in the other world their fate would be worse than that of the ordinary disbelievers. Similarly, if *'Imān* or acknowledgment in the heart is not accompanied by external affirmation and allegiance, the Holy Qur'ān regards this too as *kufr* or rejection and denial of the Truth - speaking of the infidels, it says:

يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَ هُمْ

They know him (that is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم) as they know their own sons (2:146);

or in another palce:

جَحَدُوْا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَآ اَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَّعُلُوًّا

Their souls knew them (the signs sent by Allah) to be true, yet they denied them in their wickedness and their pride. (27:14)

My respected teacher, 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh used to explain it thus - the expanse which *'Imān* and Islam have to cover in the spiritual journey is the same, and the difference lies only in the beginning and the end; that is to say, *'Imān* starts from the heart and attains perfection in external deeds, while Islam starts from external deeds and can be regarded as perfect when it reaches the heart.

To sum up, *Imān* is not valid, if acknowledgment in the heart does not attain to external affirmation and allegiance; similarly, Islam is not valid, if external affirmation and allegiance does not attain to confirmation by the heart. Imām Ghazzālī and Imām Subki both have arrived at the same conclusion, and in *Musāmarah*, Imām Ibn

al-Humām reports the agreement of all the authentic scholars in this respect.[2]

...who believe in what has been revealed to you and in what has been revealed before you, and do have faith in the Hereafter.

This verse speaks of some other attributes of the God-fearing, giving certain details about faith in the unseen with a special mention of

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2. Today one finds a very wide-spread confusion, sometimes amounting to a total incomprehension, with regard to the distinction between Islam and 'Īmān, essentially under the influence of Western modes of thought and behaviour and, to be more specific, that of the ever-proliferating Protestant sects and schools of theology. Since the middle of the 19th century there have sprouted in almost every Muslim country a host of self-styled Reformists, Revivalists, Modernists et al, each pretending to have understood the "real" Islam for the first time, and each adopting an extremist, though untenable, posture with regard to Islam and 'Īmān. On the one hand, we have people claiming that Islam is only a matter of the "heart" (a word which has during the last four hundred years been used in the West as an equivalent of "emotion" or, worse still, of "emotional agitation") or of "religious experience" (a very modish term brought into currency by William James). As a corollary, they stubbornly refuse to see the need for a fixed ritual or an ethical code, all of which they gladly leave to social exigency or individual preference. They base their claims on the unquestioned axiom that religion is "personal" relationship between the individual and "his" God. It is all too obvious that this genre of Modernist "Islam" is the progeny of Martin Luther with cross-pollination from Rousseau. On the other hand, we have fervent and sometimes violent champions of Islam insisting on a merely external performance of rituals - more often on a mere conformity to moral regulations, and even these, of their liking. They would readily exclude, and are anyhow indifferent to, the internal dimension of Islam. A recent modification of this stance (in the wake of a certain Protestant pioneering, it goes without saying) has been to replace divinely ordained rituals by acts of social service or welfare, giving them the status and value of acts of worship. Counselling on divorce, abortion, premarital sex and the rest of the baggage having already become a regular part of the functions of a Protestant clergyman, it would not be too fond to expect, even on the part of our Modernists, the speedy inclusion of acts of entertainment as well. There is still another variety of deviationists, more visible and vociferous than the rest, and perhaps more pervasive and pernicious in their influence, finding easy credence among a certain section of Muslims with a sloppy western-style education. While dispensing with the subtle distinctions between Islam and 'Īmān, they reduce Islam itself to a mere system of social organization, or even to state-craft. According to their way of looking at things, if Muslims fail to set up a social and political organization of a specified shape, they would cease to be Muslims. Applied to the history of Islam, this fanciful notion would lead **(Continued)**

faith in hereafter. Commenting on this verse, the blessed Companions 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنهم اجمعین have said that in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ God-fearing Muslims were of two kinds, - those who used to be associators and disbelievers but accepted Islam, and those who used to be among the people of the Book (that is, Jews and Christians) but embraced Islam later on; the preceding verse refers to the first group, and this verse to the second. Hence this verse specifically mentions belief in the earlier Divine Books along with belief in the Holy Qur'ān, for, according to the *Ḥadīth*, people in the second group deserve a double recompense, firstly, for believing in and following the earlier Books before the Holy Qur'ān came to replace them, and secondly, for believing in and following the Holy Qur'ān when it came as the final Book of Allah. Even today it is obligatory for every Muslim to believe in the earlier Divine Books except that now the belief has to take this form: everything that Allah has revealed in the earlier Books is true (excepting the changes and distortions introduced by selfish people), and that it was incumbent upon the people for whom those Books had been sent to act according to them, but now that all the earlier Books

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(Continued) to the grotesque conclusion that no Muslim had ever existed. These are only a few examples of the intellectual distortions produced by refusing to define Islam and 'Iman clearly and ignoring the distinction between the two. Contrary to all such modernizing deviations, Islam in fact means establishing a particular relationship of obedience and servitude with Allah. This relationship arises neither out of vague "religious experiences" nor out of social regimentation; in order to attain it, one has to accept all the doctrines and to act upon all the commandments specified in the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith and the Shari'ah. These doctrines and commandments cover all the spheres of human life, individual or collective, right up from acts of worship down to social, political and economic relations among men, and codes of ethics and behaviour, morals and manners, and their essential purpose is to produce in man a genuine attitude of obedience to Allah. If one acts according to the Shari'ah, one, no doubt, gains many worldly benefits, individual as well as collective. These benefits may be described as the raison d'etre of the commandments, but are in no way their essential object, nor should a servant of Allah seek them for themselves in obeying Him, nor does the success or failure of a Muslim as a Muslim depend on attaining them. When a man has fully submitted himself to the commandments of Allah in everything he does, he has already succeeded as a Muslim, whether he receives the related worldly benefits or not.

and Shari'ahs have been abrogated, one must act according to the Holy Qur'an alone. [3]

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3. Exactly as predicted by a Hadith, today we see all around us a proliferation of "knowledge" and of "writing". One of the dangerous forms the process has taken is the indiscriminate translation at least into European languages and the popularization of the sacred books of all possible religious and metaphysical traditions - not only the Hindu, the Chinese or the Japanese, but also the Shamanic or the Red Indian. The lust for reading sacred books has virtually grown into a mania, specially among the modern young people with their deep sense of being uprooted and disinherited, and all considerations of aptitude have been contemptuously set aside. In these circumstances, Muslims with a Western orientation are naturally impelled to ask themselves as to what they can or should make of such books which sometimes seem to offer similarities and parallels to the Holy Qur'an itself, and more often to the Sufi doctrines. The problem has already attained noticeable proportions, for in 1974 the government of Turkey found it necessary to ban the entry of certain Hindu sacred books like the Bhagavadgita and Upanishads. The correct doctrinal position in this respect is that it is obligatory for every Muslim, as an essential part of the Islamic creed, to believe in all the prophets and messengers of Allah and in the Divine Books (not in their distorted forms, but as they were originally revealed) that have specifically been mentioned by their names in the Holy Qur'an, and also to believe that Allah has sent His messengers and His books for the guidance of all the peoples and all the ages, and that Muhammad ﷺ is the last prophet and the Holy Qur'an the final Book of Allah which has come down to replace the earlier Books and Shari'ahs. As to the question of the authenticity and divine origin of a particular book held in reverence by an earlier religion or metaphysical tradition, a Muslim is not allowed to affirm such a claim unequivocally, nor should he unnecessarily reject such a possibility. In so far as contents of the book concerned agree with what the Holy Qur'an has to say on the subject, we may accept the statement as true, otherwise spiritual etiquette requires an average Muslim to keep quiet and not meddle with things which he is not likely to understand. As for reading the sacred books of other traditions, it should be clearly borne in mind that a comparative study of this nature requires a very special aptitude which is extremely rare, and hence demands great caution. A cursory reading of sacred books, motivated by an idle curiosity or by a craze for mere information, may very well lead to an intellectual disintegration or to something still worse, instead of helping in the "discovery of the truth" and the acquisition of "peace" which a comparative study is widely supposed to promise. Even when the aptitude and the knowledge necessary for the task is present, such a study can be carried out only under the supervision of an authentic spiritual master. In any case, we cannot insist too much on the perils of the enterprise.

An argument to the Finality of Prophethood

The mode of expression helps us to infer from this verse the fundamental principle that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is the last of all the prophets, and the Book revealed to him is the final revelation and the last Book of Allah. For, had Allah intended to reveal another Book or to continue. The mode of revelation even after the Holy Qur'ān, this verse, while prescribing belief in the earlier Books as necessary for Muslims, must also have referred to belief in the Book or Books to be revealed in the future. In fact, such a statement was all the more needed, for people were already familiar with the necessity of believing in the Torah, the Evangile and the earlier Books, and such a belief was in regular practice too, but if prophethood and revelation were to continue even after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was essential that the coming of another prophet and another book should be clearly indicated so that people were not left in doubt about this possibility. So, in defining *'Īmān*, the Holy Qur'ān mentions the earlier prophets and the earlier Books, but does not make the slightest reference to a prophet or Book to come after the last Prophet ﷺ. The matter does not end with this verse. The Holy Qur'ān touches upon the subject again and again in no less than forty or fifty verses, and in all such places it mentions the prophets, the Books and the revelation preceding the Holy Prophet ﷺ but nowhere is there even so much as a hint with regard to the coming of a prophet or of a revelation in the future, belief in whom or which should be necessary. We cite some verses to demonstrate the point:

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

And what We have sent down before you. (16:43)

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ

And We have certainly sent messengers before you". (40:78)

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا

And certainly before you We have sent messengers. (20:47)

وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

And what was revealed before you. (4:60)

وَلَقَدْ اُوْحِیَ اِلَیْكَ وَ اِلَی الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

And it has certainly been revealed to you and to those who have gone before you... (39:65)

كَذٰلِكَ یُوْحِیْٓ اِلَیْكَ وَ اِلَی الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

Thus He reveals to you and He revealed to those who have gone before you. (42:3)

كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَی الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ

Fasting is decreed (literally, written) for you as it was decreed for those before you. (2:183)

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَا

Such was Our way with the messengers whom We sent before you. (17:77)

In these and similar verses, whenever the Holy Qur'ān speaks of the sending down of a Book or a revelation or a prophet or a messenger, it always attaches the conditional phrase, *Min qabl* (before) or *Min Qablik* (before you), and nowhere does it employ or suggest an expression like *min ba'd* (after you). Even if other verses of the Holy Qur'an had not been explicit about the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ and about the cessation of revelation, the mode of expression adopted by the Holy Qur'ān in the present verse would in itself have been sufficient to prove these points.

The God-fearing have Faith in the Hereafter

The other essential quality of the God-fearing mentioned in this verse is that they have faith in *Al-Ākhirah* (the Hereafter). Lexically the *Akhirah* signifies 'that which comes after something'; in the present context, it indicates a relationship of contrast with the physical world, and thus signifies the other world which is beyond physical reality as we know it and also beyond the sensuous or rational perception of man. The Holy Qur'an gives to the Hereafter other names too - for example, *Dar al-Qarar* (the Ever-lasting Abode), *Dar al-Hayawān* (the Abode of Eternal Life) and *Al-'Uqba* (the Consequent). The Holy Qur'ān is full of vivid descriptions of the Hereafter, of the joys of heaven and of the horrors of hell. Although faith in the Hereafter is included in faith in the unseen which has

already been mentioned, yet the Holy Qur'an refers to it specifically because it may, in a sense, be regarded as the most important among the constitutive elements of faith in so far as it inspires man to translate faith into practice, and motivates him to act in accordance with the requirements of his faith. Along with the two doctrines of the Oneness of God and of prophethood, this is the third doctrine which is common to all the prophets and upon which all the Shari'ahs are agreed.[4]

Faith in the Hereafter: A revolutionary belief

The belief in the Hereafter, among Islamic doctrines, is the one whose role in history has been what is nowadays described as revolutionary, for it began with transmuting the morals and manners of the followers of the Holy Qur'an, and gradually gave them a place of distinction and eminence even in the political history of mankind. The reason is obvious. Consider the case of those who believe that life in the physical world is the only life, its joys the only joys and its pains the only pains, whose only goal is to seek the pleasures of the senses and the fulfilment of physical or emotional needs, and who stubbornly refuse to believe in the life of the Hereafter, in the Day of Judgment

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4. There is a deplorable misconception with regard to the Hereafter, quite wide-spread among those who are not, or do not want to be, familiar with the Holy Qur'an and who have at the same time been touched by the rationalism, materialism and libertarianism of the Western society, which makes them cherish certain mental and emotional reservations at least about the horrors of hell, if not about the joys of heaven. Some of them have gone to the preposterous length of supposing that these are the inventions of the 'Ulama' whom they describe as 'abscurantists' - of course, in the jargon of the Western Reformation and of the so-called Enlightenment. They ignore the obvious fact that faith in the Holy Qur'an necessitates faith in every word of the Holy Qur'an, and that it is not possible to affirm one part of the Book while denying another and yet remain a Muslim-- أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتٰبِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ : "What, do you believe in one part of the Book and deny another?"(2:85) Moreover, these enlightened Muslims have never made a serious attempt to take into account the complex historical factors that led to the rise of the Enlightenment in Europe, nor the meaning of the subsequent development in ethical ideas. We may, therefore, give a few and very brief indications. There has been no dearth, even in the hey-day of the Enlightenment, of thinkers who have had no scruples in dispensing with ethics altogether which they look upon as superstition or tyranny and hence a blight for the human personality.

Continued

and the assessment of everyone's deeds, and in the requital of the deeds in the other world. When such people find the distinction between truth and falsehood, between the permissible and the forbidden, interfering with the hunt for the gratification of their desires, such differentiations naturally become intolerable to them.

Now, who or what can effectively prevent them from committing crimes? The penal laws made by the state or by any other human authority can never serve either as real deterrents to crime or as agents of moral reform. Habitual criminals soon grow used to the penalties. A man, milder or gentler of temperament or just timid, may agree to forego the satisfaction of his desires for fear of punishment, but he would do so only to the extent that he is in danger of being caught. But in his privacy where the laws of the state cannot encroach upon his freedom of action, who can force him to renounce his pleasures and accept the yoke of restraints? It is the belief in the Hereafter and the fear of Allah, and that alone, which can bring man's private behaviour in line with his public behaviour, and establish a harmony between the inner state and the outer. For the God-fearing man knows for certain that even in the secrecy of a well-guarded and sealed room and in the darkness of night somebody is watching him, and somebody is writing down the smallest thing he does. Herein lies the secret of the clean and pure society which arose in the early days of Islam when the mere sight of a Muslim, of his manners and morals, was enough to make non-believers literally fall in love with Islam. For

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(Continued) But even those thinkers who have recognised the indispensable need for regulations and rules, if not principles, for human conduct in order to preserve social order or to make social life possible, have in general had no qualms about discarding the very idea of divine sanction - despite the intimation of Voltaire, the arch-priest of relationalism, that man would have to invent God, even if He did not exist. As to the nature and origin of the ethical regulations and the sanction behind them, Western thinkers have from time to time tried to promote various agencies - the sovereign state, social will or convention or custom, the supposedly pure and innocent nature of man himself with its capacity for self-regulation, and finally biological laws. The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed the withering away of all these ethical authorities which has left the modern man without even a dim prospect of constructing a new illusion. It is only in this perspective that one can properly consider the significance of the belief in the hereafter for human society.

true Faith in the Hereafter, certitude must follow Oral Affirmation.

Before we proceed, we may point out that in speaking of faith in the hereafter as one of the qualities of the God-fearing, the Holy Qur'ān does not use the word *yu'minūna* (believe) but the word *yūqinūna* (have complete certitude), for the opposite of belief is denial, and that of certitude is doubt and hesitation. Thus, we find a subtle suggestion here that in order to attain the perfection of *'Īmān* it is not enough to affirm the hereafter orally, but one must have a complete certitude which leaves no room for doubt - the kind of certitude which comes when one has seen a thing with one's own eyes. It is an essential quality of the God-fearing that they always have present before their eyes the whole picture of how people will have to present themselves for judgment before Allah in the hereafter, how their deeds will be assessed and how they will receive reward or punishment according to what they have been doing in this world. A man who amasses wealth by usurping what righfully belongs to others, or who gains petty material ends by adopting unlawful means forbidden by Allah, may declare his faith in the hereafter a thousand times and the Sharī'ah may accept him as a Muslim in the context of worldly concerns, but he does not possess the certitude which the Holy Qur'ān demands of him. And it is this certitude alone which transforms human life, and which brings in its wake as a reward the guidance and triumph promised in verse 5 of this Sūrah:

أُولَٰٓئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord; and it is just these who are successful.

Verses 6-7

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝ خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝

Surely for those who have disbelieved, it is all the same whether you warn them or you warn them not: they would not believe. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes there is a

covering; and for them there lies a mighty punishment. (Verses 6-7)

After affirming the Holy Qur'ān as the Book of Guidance and as being beyond all doubt, the first five verses of the present Surah refer to those who derive full benefit from this Book and whom the Holy Qur'ān has named as *Mū'minūn* (true Muslims) or *Muttaqūn* (the God-fearing), and also delineate their characteristic qualities which distinguish them from others. The next fifteen verses speak of those who refuse to accept this guidance, and even oppose it out of sheer spite and blind malice. In the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم there were two distinct groups of such people. On the one hand were those who came out in open hostility and rejection, and whom the Holy Qur'ān has termed as *kafirūn* (disbelievers); on the other hand were those who did not, on account of their moral depravity and greed, had even the courage to speak out their minds and to express their disbelief clearly, but adopted the way of deceit and duplicity. They tried to convince the Muslims that they had faith in the Holy Qur'ān and its teachings, that they were as good a Muslim as any and would support the Muslims against the disbelievers. But they nursed denial and rejection in their hearts, and would, in the company of disbelievers, assure them that they had nothing to do with Islam, but mixed with Muslims in order to deceive them and to spy on them. The Holy Qur'an has given them the title of *Munāfiqūn* (hypocrites). Thus, these fifteen verses deal with those who refuse to believe in the Holy Qur'ān - the first two are concerned with open disbelievers, and the other thirteen with hypocrites, their signs and characteristics and their ultimate end.

Taking the first twenty verses of this Sūrah together in all their detail, one can see that the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, pointed out to us the source of guidance which is the Book itself, and, on the other, divided mankind into two distinct groups on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of this guidance - on the one side are those who have chosen to follow and to receive guidance, and are hence called *Mū'minūn* (true Muslims) or *Muttaqūn* (the God-fearing); on the other side are those who reject the guidance or deviate from it, and are hence called *Kāfirūn* (disbelievers) or *Munafiqūn* (hypocrites). People of the first kind are those whose path is the object of the prayer at the

end of the Surah Al-Fatihah, صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ : "the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace", and people of the second kind are those against whose path refuge has been sought غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ "Not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

This teaching of the Holy Qur'an provides us with a fundamental principle. A division of mankind into different groups must, in order to be meaningful, be based on differences in principle, not on considerations of birth, race, colour, geography or language. The Holy Qur'an has given a clear verdict in this respect:

خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ

> "It was He that created you: yet some of you are disbelievers and some of you are believers" (64:2).

As we have said, the first two verses of this Surah speak of those disbelievers who had become so stubborn and obstinate in their denial and disbelief that they were not prepared to hear the truth or to consider a clear argument. In the case of such depraved people, the usual way of Allah has always been, and is, that they are given a certain kind of punishment even in this world - that is to say, their hearts are sealed and their eyes and ears stopped against the truth, and in so far as truth is concerned they become as if they have no mind to think, no eyes to see and no ears to listen. The last phrase of the second verse speaks of the grievous punishment that is reserved for them in the other world. It may be observed that the prediction that: لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ : "they shall not believe" is specifically related to those disbelievers who refused to listen to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and who, as Allah knew, were going to die as disbelievers. This does not apply to disbelievers in general, for there were many who later accepted Islam.

What is *Kufr* ? (Infidelity)

As for the definition of *kufr* (disbelief), we may point out that lexically the word means to hide, to conceal. Ingratitude is also called *kufr*, because it involves the concealing or the covering up of the beneficence shown by someone. In the terminology of the Shari'ah, *kufr* signifies the denial of any of those things in which it is obligatory to believe. For example, the quintessence of *'Iman* as well as the very

basis of the Islamic creed is the requirement that one should confirm with one's heart and believe with certitude everything that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has brought down to us from Allah and which has been established by definite and conclusive proof; therefore, a man who has the temerity to question or disregard even a single teaching of this kind will be described as a *kāfir* (disbeliever or infidel).

The meaning of '*Indhār*' (warning) by a Prophet

In translating the first of these two verses, we have used the English verb 'to warn' for the Arabic word *Indhār*. This word actually signifies bringing news which should cause alarm or concern, while *Ibshār* signifies bringing good news which should make people rejoice. Moreover, *Indhār* is not the ordinary kind of warning meant to frighten people, but one which is motivated by compassion and love, just as one warns one's children against fire or snakes or beasts. Hence a thief or a bandit or an aggressor who warns or threatens others cannot be called a *Nadhīr* (warner). The latter is a title specially reserved for the prophets عليهم السلام , for they warn people against the pains and punishments of the other world out of their compassion and love for their fellow men. In choosing this title for the prophets, the Holy Qur'ān has made the subtle suggestion that for those who go out to reform others it is not enough merely to convey a message, but that they must speak to their listeners with sympathy, understanding and a genuine regard for their good.

In order to comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the first of these verses tells him that some of the disbelievers are so vain, arrogant and opinionated that they, in spite of recognizing the truth, stubbornly persist in their refusal and are not prepared to hear the truth or to see obvious proofs, so that all the efforts he makes for reforming and converting them will bear no fruit, and for them it is all one whether he tries or not.

The next verse explains the reason, that is, Allah has set a seal on their hearts and ears, there is a covering on their eyes, all the avenues of knowing and understanding are thus closed, and now it would be futile to expect any change in them. A thing is sealed so that nothing may enter it from outside; the setting of a seal on their hearts and ears

also means that they have altogether lost the capacity for accepting the truth.

The Holy Qur'ān describes the condition of these disbelievers in terms of their hearts and ears having been sealed, but in the case of the eyes it refers to a covering. The subtle distinction arises from the fact that an idea can enter the heart from all possible directions and not from one particular direction alone, and so can a sound enter the ears; an idea or a sound can be blocked only by sealing the heart and the ears. On the contrary, the eyes work only in one direction, and can see only the things which lie in front of them; if there is a covering on them, they cease to function. (See Maẓharī)

Favour withdrawn by Allah is a punishment

These two verses tell us that the other world is the place where one would receive the real punishment for one's disbelief or for some of one's sins. One may, however, receive some punishment for certain sins even in this world. Such a punishment sometimes takes a very grievous form - that is, the divine favour which helps one to reform oneself is withdrawn, so that, ignoring how one's deeds are to be assessed on the Day of Judgment, one keeps growing in disobedience and sin, and finally comes to lose even the awareness of evil. In delineating such a situation certain elders have remarked that one punishment for an evil deed is another evil deed which comes after, and one reward for a good deed is another good deed which comes after. According to a *Ḥadīth*, when a man commits a sin, a black dot appears on his heart; this first dot disturbs him just as a smudge on a white cloth is always displeasing to us; but if, instead of asking Allah's pardon for the first sin, he proceeds to commit a second, another dot shows up, thus, with every new sin the black dots go on multiplying till the whole heart turns dark, and now he can no longer see good as good nor evil as evil, and grows quite incapable of making such distinctions. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم added that The Holy Qur'ān uses the term *Ra'n* or *Rain* (rust) for this darkness: as in Mishkāt from the Musnad of Aḥmad and Tirmidhī.

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

No. But what they did has rusted their hearts (83:14)

According to another authentic Ḥadīth reported by Tirmidhī from the blessed Companion Abu Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "When a man commits a sin, his heart grows dark, but if he seeks Allah's pardon, it becomes clear again". (See Qurṭubī)

It should be carefully noted that in announcing that it is all one whether the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم warns the disbelievers or not, the Holy Qur'an adds the condition *'Alaihim* (for them), which clearly indicates that it is all one for the disbelievers alone, and not for the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, for he would in any case get a reward for bringing the message of Allah to his fellow-men and for his efforts to teach and reform them. That is why there is not a single verse in the Holy Qur'ān which should dissuade the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم from calling even such people to Islam. From this we may infer that the man who strives to spread the Word of Allah and to reform his fellow-men does always get a reward for his good deed, even if he has not been effective.

A doubt is removed

We may also answer a question which sometimes arises in connection with the second of these two verses that speaks of the hearts and the ears of the disbelievers having been sealed and of their eyes being covered. We find a similar statement in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ

No. But what they did has rusted their hearts. (83:14)

which makes it plain that it is their arrogance and their evil deeds themselves that have settled on their hearts as a rust. In the verse under discussion, it is this very rust which has been described as 'a seal' or 'a covering'. So, there is no occasion here to raise the objection that if Allah Himself has sealed their hearts and blocked their senses, they are helpless and cannot be held responsible for being disbelievers, and hence they should not be punished for what they have not themselves chosen to do. If we consider the two verses (2:7 and 83:14) together, we can easily see why they should be punished - in adopting the way of arrogance and pride they have, wilfully and out of their own choice, destroyed their capacity for accepting the truth, and thus they

themselves are the authors of their own ruin. But Allah, being Creator of all the actions of His creatures, has in verse 2:7 attributed to Himself the setting of a seal on the hearts and the ears of the disbelievers, and has thus pointed out that when these people insisted, as a matter of their own choice, on destroying their aptitude for receiving the truth, Allah produced, as is His way in such cases, the state of insensitivity in their hearts and senses.

Verses 8-20

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ
بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝ يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ وَمَا يَخْدَعُوْنَ اِلَّآ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مَرَضًا ۚ
وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۢبِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ لَا
تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُوْنَ ۝ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
الْمُفْسِدُوْنَ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اٰمِنُوْا كَمَآ اٰمَنَ
النَّاسُ قَالُوْٓا اَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَآ اٰمَنَ السُّفَهَآءُ ۭ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَآءُ
وَلٰكِنْ لَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَاِذَا
خَلَوْا اِلٰى شَيٰطِيْنِهِمْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ اِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۝
اَللّٰهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ۝ اُولٰٓئِكَ
الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلٰلَةَ بِالْهُدٰى فَمَا رَبِحَتْ تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا
مُهْتَدِيْنَ ۝ مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَضَآءَتْ
مَا حَوْلَهٗ ذَهَبَ اللّٰهُ بِنُوْرِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِيْ ظُلُمٰتٍ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ۝
صُمٌّۢ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ۝ اَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فِيْهِ
ظُلُمٰتٌ وَّرَعْدٌ وَّبَرْقٌ ۚ يَجْعَلُوْنَ اَصَابِعَهُمْ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ
الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ مُحِيْطٌۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۝ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ
يَخْطَفُ اَبْصَارَهُمْ ۭ كُلَّمَآ اَضَآءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيْهِ ۙ وَاِذَآ اَظْلَمَ

عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوْا، وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَاَبْصَارِهِمْ، اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝

And among men there are some who say, "We believe in Allah and in the Last Day", Yet they are no believers. They try to deceive Allah and those who believe, when they are deceiving none but their ownselves, and they are not aware. In their hearts there is a malady, so Allah has made them grow in their malady; and for them there lies a grievous punishment, for they have been lying. And when it is said to them, "Do not spread disorder on the earth", they say, "We are nothing but reformers." Beware, it is, in fact, they who spread disorder, but they are not aware. And when it is said to them, "Believe as people have believed," they say, "Shall we believe as fools believe?" Beware, it is, in fact, they who are the fools, but they do not know. And when they meet those who believe, they say, "We have entered Faith;" but when they are alone with their Satans, they say, "Indeed, we are with you; we were only mocking." It is Allah who mocks them, and lets them go on wandering blindly in their rebellion. These are the people who have bought error at the price of guidance; so their trade has brought no gain, nor have they found guidance. Their case is as if a man kindles a fire, and when it illuminates everything around him, Allah takes away their lights and leaves them in layers of darkness -- they see nothing. Deaf, dumb and blind, they shall not return. Or (it is) like a rainstorm from the sky carrying darkness, thunder and lightning; they thrust their fingers in their ears against thunderclaps for the fear of death, and Allah encompasses the disbelievers -- and lightning (all but) snatches away their eyes; every time a flash gives them light, they walk by it; and when darkness grows upon them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He would certainly take away their hearing and their eye: surely Allah is powerful over everything. (Verses 8 - 20)

As we have seen, the Sūrah Al-Baqarah opens with the declaration that the Holy Qur'ān is beyond all doubt. The first twenty verses of the Sūrah delineate the features of those who believe in the Holy Qur'ān

and of those who do not -- the first five dealing with the former, under the title of *Al-Muttaqūn* (the God-fearing); the next two with those disbelievers who were quite open and violent in their hostility -- that is, *Al-Kafirūn* (the disbelievers or the infidels), and the following thirteen with those crafty disbelievers who claimed to be Muslims but, in reality, were not so. This second variety of the disbelievers has received from the Holy Qur'ān the name of *Al-Mūnāfiqūn* (the hypocrities).

Of these thirteen verses, the first two define the characteristic behaviour of the hypocrites thus:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ

> And among men there are some who say, 'We believe in Allah and in the Last Day',

yet they are no believers. They try to deceive Allah and those who believe, when they are deceiving none but their ownselves, and they are not aware. These verses expose their claim to be Muslims as false and deceitful, and show that they are only trying to be clever. Obviously, no one can deceive Allah - probably they themselves could not have had such a delusion. But the Holy Qur'ān equates, in a way, their attempt to deceive the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Muslims with the desire to deceive Allah Himself (See Qurṭubī)

Such a desire, the Holy Qur'ān points out, can have only one consequence - they end up by deceiving no one but themselves, for Allah Himself cannot possibly be deceived, and Divine Revelation protects the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from all trickery and deceit, so that the hypocrites themselves will have to bear, in the other world as well as in this, the punishment for their presumptuousness.

The third verse indicates why the hypocrites behave so foolishly and why they fail to see the folly of their course:

فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مَرَضًا

> In their hearts there is a malady, so Allah has made them grow in their malady.

Now, illness or disease, in the general medical sense, is a state in which a man has lost the balanced proportion of the elements within

him necessary to keep him healthy, so that his body can no longer function properly, which may finally lead to his total destruction. In the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, the word 'disease' is also applied to certain mental or psychic states (we are using the two terms in the original and more comprehensive sense) which hinder man from attaining any degree of spiritual perfection, for they gradually deprive him of the ability to perform good deeds, and even of ordinary human decency, till he meets with his spiritual death. The great spiritual master, Junaid of Baghdad, has said that just as the diseases of the body arise from an imbalance among the four humours, the diseases of the heart arise from a surrender to one's physical desires. According to the present verse, the disease hidden in their hearts is unbelief and rejection of the truth, which is as much a physical sickness as a spiritual one. It is all too obvious that being ungrateful to one's creator and nourisher and going against His commandments is to be spiritually sick. Moreover, to keep this disbelief concealed for the sake of petty worldly gains and not to have the courage to speak out one's mind is no less a disease of the soul. Hypocrisy is a physical disease too in so far as the hypocrite is always shuddering for fear of being exposed. Jealousy being a necessary ingredient of hypocrisy, he cannot bear to see the Muslims growing stronger in the world, and yet the poor hypocrite cannot even have the satisfaction of unburdening his heart of the venom. No wonder that all this tension should express itself in physical ailment.

As for Allah making them grow in their malady, it means that they are jealous of the growing strength of the Muslims, but it is Allah's will to make the position of the Muslims even stronger, as they can see for themselves, which feeds their bile and keeps the disease of their hearts growing.

The fourth and the fifth verses expose the sophistry of the hypocrites - their activities threatened to produce a general chaos and disorder, and yet, in their mealy-mouthed way, they pretended to be men of good will and to be serving the cause of peace and order. The Holy Qur'ān makes it clear that oral claims alone do not decide the question whether one is working for order or disorder, for what thief would call himself a thief? It depends on what one does, not on what

one says. If a man's activities do result in mischief, he will be called a mischief-maker, even if he had no such intention.

These two verses, thus, describe the state of their insensitivity and ignorance - they regard their defects as merits. The sixth verse shows the other aspect of this depravity - the merit of others (that is, the unalloyed faith of the Muslims) changes into a defect, and even becomes contemptible in their eyes.[5]

This verse also places before the hypocrites a criterion of true faith (*'Īmān*): اٰمِنُوْا كَمَآ اٰمَنَ النَّاسُ :"Believe as people have believed". According to the consensus of commentators, the Arabic word *Nās*: الناس (people) in this verse refers to the blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ because it is just these 'people' who had embraced the Faith and had accepted the Holy Qur'ān as the word of Allah while it was being revealed. So, the verse indicates that the only kind of *'Iman* (faith) acceptable to Allah is the one which should be similar to that of the blessed Companions, and that the *'Īmān* of others would be worthy of the name only when they believe in the same things in the same way as the Companions did. In other words, the *'Īmān* of the Companions is a touchstone for testing the *'Īmān* of all the other Muslims; any belief or deed which departs from their faith and practice, however pleasing in its looks or good in its intention, is not valid according to the Sharī'ah. There is a consensus of commentators on this position. One should also notice that the hypocrites used to call the blessed Companions 'fools' (*Sufahā'*). This has always been the way of those who go astray - anyone who tries to show them the right path is, in their eyes, ignorant and stupid. But who could, the Holy Qur'ān points out, be more stupid than the man who refuses to see clear signs?

In the seventh verse, we see the double-facedness and trickery of the hypocrites. In the company of the Muslims, they would vociferously declare their faith in Islam; but, going back to their own

5. As for the hypocrites declaring openly that they were not prepared to believe as others did believe, and as for their dubbing the Muslims as fools, it is obvious that they could have been so outspoken only before the poor among the Muslims, otherwise they used to be very careful about keeping their disbelief concealed.)

people, would reassure them that they had never left the way of their ancestors, and had been meeting the Muslims only to make fun of them.

The eighth verse is a comment on this attitude of complacency and self-congratulation on the part of the hypocrites. They are mightily pleased with themselves in the belief that they can so easily make a fool of the Muslims and get away with it, while they are, in fact, only making a fool of themselves. For Allah has, in His forbearance and mercy, given them a long rope, but this is a provision for their being thrown into ridicule. It took place like this. Since the hypocrites saw no apparent signs of divine punishment descending on themselves, they were encouraged in their complacency and rebellion, so that the cup of their iniquity was full, and one day they were caught. Allah acted like this in response to their mockery; so, the Holy Qur'ān describes this divine action too as a mockery on the part of Allah.

The ninth verse shows the basic denseness of the hypocrites - how they failed to make use of the ordinary sense of discrimination. They had grown up in a pagan society, and knew very well what the way of the infidels was. Now they had become familiar enough with Islam too, and could easily see the difference. But, in their greed, and for the sake of petty worldly profit, they still chose disbelief as against Islam, and bartered away something as invaluable as *'Īmān* (faith) for something as worthless, and even harmful as *kufr* (infidelity). In giving the name of 'trade' or 'commerce' to this action, the Holy Qur'ān suggests that these worldly-wise men had no understanding even of the art of trading.

The last four verses bring out the miserable plight of the hypocrites with the help of two extended similes. The choice of two examples is meant to divide the hypocrites into two kinds of men. On the one hand were those in whom disbelief had taken deep roots, so that they had little inclination towards Islam, but pretended to be Muslims for worldly motives - the Holy Qur'ān compares them to the man who, having found light, again loses it, and is left in darkness. On the other hand were those who did recognize the truth of Islam, and sometimes wished to be genuine Muslims, but worldly interests would not allow them to do so, and they remained in a perpetual state of

hesitation and doubt - they have been likened to the men caught in a thunderstorm who move forward a step or two when there is a flash of lightning, but, when it is over, again get stuck. In the course of these parables, the hypocrites have also been warned that they are not beyond the power of Allah, and that He can, as and when He likes, take away their sight and hearing, and even destroy them.

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) It has sometimes been debated as to whether the distinction between *Kufr* (infidelity or disbelief) and *Nifāq* (hypocrisy) still holds good even after the days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The correct position with regard to this question is this. At that time, there were two ways of identifying a hypocrite and declaring him to be one - either Allah Himself informed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through revelation that such and such a man was not a Muslim at heart but a hypocrite, or a man through some word or deed overtly repugnant to the Islamic creed or practice showed himself up as a hypocrite, thus providing a clear evidence against himself. Divine revelation having ceased with the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from this world, the first way of identifying a hypocrite is no longer available, but the second way is still valid. That is to say, if a man is found, on certain evidence, to be guilty, in word or deed, of rejecting or opposing or distorting or holding in scorn the basic doctrines of Islam undeniably established by the Holy Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth* and *ijmā'* (consensus), he would be regarded as a *Munāfiq* (hypocrite) in spite of his claim to be a true Muslim. The Holy Qur'ān gives such a hypocrite the name of a *mulhid* or heretic- الَّذِيْنَ يُلْحِدُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا : "Those who distort Our verses", 41:40), and the *Ḥadīth* calls him a *zindīq*. One must also add that since the *kufr* (infidelity) of such a man has been proved by clear and definite evidence, the *Sharī'ah* will not put him in a separate category, but deal with him as it would deal with any other *kāfir* (infidel). That is why the authentic scholars are unanimous in concluding that after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the question of hypocrites ceased to be a relevant one - now anyone who is not a genuine Muslim will be regarded as *kāfir*. The famous author, *Al-'Ainī*, in his commentary on Al-Bukhārī, reports from Imām *Mālik* that after the days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم this is the only available means of identifying 'hypocrisy', and that a man who carries this mark could be called a hypocrite.

(2) A little reflection on these verses would reveal the true nature of Islam and *'Īmān* (faith) and also that of *kufr* (disbelief), for the Holy Qur'an reports the claim of the hypocrites to be Muslims: آمَنَّا بِاللهِ :"we believe in Allah", (2:8), forthwith refutes this claim: وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ :"yet they are no believers". In order to understand fully the implications of these verses, one should bear in one's mind the fact that the hypocrites in question were actually Jews. Now, belief in Allah and in Hereafter is, no doubt, an essential part of their creed as well; what was not included in their creed, as defined by their religious scholars, was the belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم . In declaring their faith in Islam, the Jews very cleverly used to leave out the belief in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and mention only two elements: belief in Allah and belief in the Hereafter. So far as such a declaration goes, they cannot be called liars, and yet the Holy Qur'ān refutes their claim to be Muslims, and regards them as liars. Why?

The fact is that, for one to be a Muslim, it is not sufficient merely to declare one's faith in Allah and the Hereafter in any form or manner which suits one's individual or collective fancy. As for that, associators of all kinds do, in one way or another, believe in Allah and consider Him to be Omnipotent[6] but the Holy Qur'ān does not allow any of these things to pass for *'Īmān* (faith). *'Īmān* or faith in Allah must, in order to be valid and worthy of the name, conform to what the Holy Qur'ān specifically lays down with regards to the divine names and attributes; similarly, belief in the Hereafter can be valid only when it is true to the specifications of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*.[7]

6. Even peoples described by the Westerners as "savages" or "primitives - though "degenerates" would be far closer to the mark - have at least a vague notion of a Supreme Deity, and ususally very vivid ideas about the other world.

7. There is no end to the making of books, and no end to the making of gods and to the naming of gods - above all, in our own day. Reason, Nature, Man, Life, all having served their turn and grown rusty, are being replaced by more fancy names - "the ground of being" of the so-called Christian Existentialism, the ultimate "archetype of the Collective Unconscious" of Jungian psychology, and what not. They have lately invented a goldless theology too.

In the light of this explanation one can see that the Jews who pretended to be Muslims believed neither in Allah nor in the Hereafter according to these definite requirements. For, on the one hand, they regarded the Prophet 'Uzair or Ezra عليه السلام as the son of God, and, on the other, cherished the fond belief that the progeny of the prophets, no matter how it acted, would always remain 'the chosen of God', and would not be called to account on the Day of Judgment, or at the worst receive only a token punishment. These being their beliefs, the Holy Qur'ān rightly rejects their claims to faith in Allah and the Hereafter.

(3) As we have already said, verse 13 defines what *'Īmān* (faith) really is: اٰمِنُوْا كَمَآ اٰمَنَ النَّاسُ :"Believe as other men have believed". In other words, the criterion for judging one's claim to *'Īmān* is the *'Īmān* of the blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and any claim to *Iman* which does not conform to it is not acceptable to Allah and to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If a man has the presumption[8] to interpret an Islamic doctrine or verse of the Holy Qur'ān in a way which departs from the explicit and clear explanation provided by the Holy Qur'ān itself or by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his individual opinion and belief, no matter how much it titillates the palate of his contemporaries or feeds their fancy, will have no value or validity in the eyes of the *Sharī'ah*. For example, the *Qādiānīs* [9] claim that like Muslims they too believe in the doctrine of the Finality of the Prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ, but in this respect they deviate from what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself stated, and what the Companions believed in, and distort the doctrine so as to make room for the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Aḥmad of Qādian; so, according to the indication of the Holy Qur'ān, they come under this indictment: مَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ :"They are no believers."

In short, if a man interprets an Islamic doctrine in a way which is repugnant to the *'Īmān* of the blessed Companions, and yet claims to be a Muslim on the basis of his adherence to this doctrine and also performs his religious duties exactly like Muslims, he will not be considered a *Mu'min* (true Muslim) until and unless he agrees to conform to the criterion of *'Īmān* laid down by the Holy Qur'ān.

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8. As is all too common these days.

9. Who style themselves as Ahmadis.

Removal of a doubt

We may also dispel a misunderstanding which often arises - and is more often made to arise with an ulterior motive - with regard to the famous dictum in the *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) that the 'people of the Ka'bah' (*Ahl al-Qiblah*), that is, those who turn towards the Ka'bah in offering prescribed *Salah* cannot be branded as infidels. The verse under discussion clearly defines the meaning of the phrase, *Ahl al-Qiblah*. The term pertains only to those who do not deny any of the basic essential doctrines and commandments of Islam which are called the *Darūriāt* (essentials). For that matter even the hypocrites mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān used to offer their prayers exactly as the Muslims did; but turning towards Ka'bah while praying was not taken to be sufficient to make them acceptable as true Muslims, simply because they did not have faith in all the essentials of Islam as the blessed Companions did.

Lying is contemptible

(4) The verse اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ :"We believe in Allah and in the Last Day" shows us how disgusting it is to tell a lie - even the hypocrites, with all their hostility to Islam, tried to refrain from it as far as possible. In claiming to be Muslims, they used to mention only their faith in Allah and in the Day of Judgment, but left out the faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for fear of telling a lie.

Misbehaving Prophets is to misbehave with Allah

(5) These verses denounce the hypocrites for trying to be clever with Allah Himself and to deceive Him, although no one among them could probably have had such an intention or even thought of such a possibility. What they were actually doing was to try to deceive the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims. Allah has equated this effort with an attempt to deceive Him, and has thus indicated that a man who is in any way impertinent to a prophet or a man of Allah is ultimately guilty of being impertinent to Allah Himself - this should be true above all in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who stands in his station at the head of all created beings.

The curse of telling lies

(6) There is another subtle and very significant point here. According to these verses, the hypocrites would meet with a grievous

punishment for having told lies. Now, their greatest crime was disbelief and hypocrisy in matters of faith, and they had been committing other crimes as well, like nursing envy and malice against Muslims in their hearts and actually conspiring against them. And yet here the grievous punishment has been connected with their habit of telling lies. This is an indication that basically this nefarious habit was their real crime, which gradually led them to hypocrisy and disbelief. In other words, although hypocrisy and disbelief are much greater crimes, yet they arise from the habit of telling lies. That is why the Holy Qur'ān combines the sin of lying with the sin of idol worship in the same phrase:

فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ ۝

"Guard yourselves against the filth of idols and against telling lies" (22:30)

Who are reformers and mischief-makers

(7) As these verses report, when the hypocrites were asked not to spread disorder in the land through their prevarication and double dealing, they used to reply emphatically: إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ :"We are nothing but reformers." The word *Innamā* (nothing but), used in the Arabic text, indicates not merely emphasis but exclusivity. So, their reply would mean that they were nothing but reformers, the servants of order, and that their activities could have nothing to do with disorder. Commenting on their reply, the Holy Qur'ān says:

أَلَآ إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝

"Beware, it is, in fact, they who spread disorder, but they are not aware."

Now, we learn two things from this comment. Firstly, the activities of the hypocrites did actually produce disorder in the land. Secondly, they did not indulge in these activities with the express intention or design of creating disorder - they were not even aware of the possibility that their actions could be the cause of disorder. For, among the things which spread disorder in the world, there are some which are commonly recognized to be mischievous and disorderly activities, and hence every sensible and conscientious man refrains from them e.g., theft, robbery, murder, rape etc.; on the other hand, there are some which in their external aspect do not appear to be mischief or

disorder, but, working unseen, they have the necessary consequence of destroying the morals of men which, in its turn, opens the door to all kinds of disorder.

This is exactly what the hypocrites were doing. No doubt, they refrained from theft, robbery etc.; it was on this count that they denied their being mischievous, and emphatically asserted that they were serving the cause of order. But all this while they had been freely giving vent to their malice and envy by conspiring with the enemies of the Muslims. These are things which finally bring man down to the level of beasts. Once he has lost his awareness of ethical values and human decency, even an average man becomes an agent of social disorder - of a disorder much greater than that released by thieves or robbers, or even beasts are capable of producing. For, the mischief of robbers and beasts can be controlled by the physical power of law and government. But laws are made and enforced by men. What happens to laws, when man has ceased to be man, can easily be witnessed all around us in the world of today. Everyone takes it for granted that humanity is on the march and the modern man is so far the ultimate in civilization; the network of educational institutions covers every hamlet on the face of the earth; legislative bodies keep buzzing night and day; organizations for the promulgation of laws spend billions, and circumlocution offices proliferate. And yet crime and disorder keep in step with the march of civilization. The reason is simple.

Law is not an automatic machine; it requires men to make it work. If man ceases to be man, neither laws nor bureaucratic agencies can provide a remedy for the all-pervading disorder. It is for this that the greatest benefactor of mankind, the Holy Prophet , concentrated all his attention on making men real men - in all the plenitude of the term. Once this has been achieved, crime or disorder comes to an end of itself without the help of enormous police forces and extensive system of law-courts. As long as people acted upon his teachings in certain parts of the world, man saw a kind of peace and order prevail the like of which had never been witnessed before nor is likely to be witnessed when these teachings are abandoned or disregarded.

In so far as actual practice is concerned, the essence of the

teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is fear of Allah and solicitude for the assessment of one's deeds on the Day of Judgment. If these are absent, no constitution or legal code, nor administrative body or university can force or induce man to keep away from crime. Those who run the world in our day invent ever-new administrative measures to prevent crime, but they not only neglect the very soul of administration, the fear of Allah, but even deploy the means of destroying it - all of which has the necessary consequence that the remedy only helps to feed the malady.

To another aspect of the question, it is easy enough to find a cure for thieves and robbers and for all those who create disorder openly. But the miscreants who have been described in these verses always appear in the garb of reformers, brandishing colourful schemes of social amelioration which are only a mask for personal interests, and for raising the slogan, إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ :"We are nothing but reformers." Hence it is that Allah, while asking men not to spread disorder on the earth, has also said in another place:

وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ط

> "And Allah knows the one who makes mischief distinct from him who promotes good." (2:220)

This is an indication that Allah alone[10] knows the states of men's hearts and their intentions, and He alone knows the nature and consequences of each human deed as to whether it would help the cause of order or of disorder. So, to serve the cause of order, it is not sufficient merely to possess such an intention; much more essential than that is to orient oneself in thought and deed in harmony with the *Sharī'ah*, for an action may, in spite of the best intentions, sometimes result in mischief and disorder, if it is not guided by the *Sharī'ah*.

Verses 21-22

يَآيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ٥ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَّالسَّمَآءَ

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10. Can distinguish between order and disorder, for He alone.

بِنَآءً وَّاَنۡزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخۡرَجَ بِهٖ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزۡقًا لَّكُمۡ
فَلَا تَجۡعَلُوۡا لِلّٰهِ اَنۡدَادًا وَّ اَنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝

O men, worship your Lord - who created you and those before you, so that you may become God-fearing - who made the earth a bed for you and the sky a roof, and sent down water from the sky, then through it brought forth, out of fruits, provision for you. So, do not set up parallels to Allah when you know. (Verses 21-22)

A review of verses linked together

The second verse of the Sūrah 'Al-Baqarah' provides the answer to the prayer made in the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, اِهۡدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الۡمُسۡتَقِيۡمَ :"Guide us in the straight path"- that is to say, the guidance man has prayed for is present in this book, for the Holy Qur'ān is from the beginning to the end a detailed account of the straight path. Then, the Surah proceeds to divide men into three groups according to whether they accept the guidance of the Holy Qur'ān or not. Three verses speak of the true and God-fearing Muslims, who not only accept but also act upon the guidance, and the next two verses of those disbelievers who oppose it openly.

Then come thirteen verses dealing with the hypocrites who are hostile to this guidance, but, for the sake of petty worldly interests or in seeking to harm the Muslims, try to keep their disbelief concealed and to present themselves as Muslims. Thus, the first twenty verses of the Surah, in dividing men into three groups on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of the guidance, indicate that the proper criterion for dividing men into groups is neither race or colour, nor language nor geography, but religion. Hence those, who believe in Allah and follow the guidance He has provided in the Holy Qur'ān, form one nation, and those who disbelieve form a different nation - the Holy Qur'ān calls the former the 'party of Allah' and the latter - 'the party of Satan' (58:19-22)

Then, the present verses (21 and 22), addressing the three groups together, present the message for which the Holy Qur'ān has been revealed. In asking men to give up the worship of created beings and to worship Allah alone, they adopt a mode of expression which not only

makes an affirmation but also supports it with arguments so clear that even an average man, only if he uses his common sense, cannot help being convinced of the Oneness of God.

Commentary :

In starting the address, verse 21 uses the Arabic word *An-nās*, which signifies man in general, or man as such - so, the word covers all the three groups we have just mentioned. And the message delivered by the verse is: اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ : "Worship your Lord." The Arabic word *'Ibādah* (worship) connotes expending all energies one has in total obedience to somebody, and shunning all disobedience out of one's awe and reverence. (Rūh-al-Bayān) We have earlier explained the meaning of the word *Rabb* (one who gives nurture). Let us add that the choice of this particular name from among the Beautiful names of Allah is very meaningful in the present context, for the affirmation has thus been combined with the argument in a very short sentence. The word *Rabb* indicates that only He is, or can be, worthy of being worshipped, He is the final and absolute Cause of nurturing man - Who changes man through gradual stages of development from a drop of water into healthy, sentient and rational being, and Who provides the means for his sustenance and growth. This truth is so obvious that even an ignorant or intellectually dull man would, on a little reflection, not fail to see and admit that such a power of nurturing can belong only to Allah, and not to a created being. What can a creature do for man, when it owes its very existence to the Creator? Can a needy one come to the help of another? And if it appears to be doing so, the act of nurturing must in reality and ultimately belong to the One Being on whom both have to depend in order to exist at all. So, who else but the *Rabb* can be worthy of adoration and worship?

The sentence is addressed to all the three groups of men, and for each it has a different meaning. "Worship your Lord": the phrase calls upon the disbelievers to give up worshipping created beings and to turn to the Creator; it asks the hypocrites to be sincere and true in their faith; it commands the sinning Muslims to change their ways and try to be perfect in their obedience to Allah; and it encourages the God-fearing Muslims to be steadfast in their worship and obedience, and to make a greater effort in the way of Allah (Rūh-al-Bayān).

The two verses proceed to enlarge upon the theme by specifying certain special qualities of the *Rabb*: اَلَّذِیْ خَلَقَکُمْ وَالَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِکُمْ :"Who created you and those before you." This is a quality which one cannot even imagine to belong to a created being, for it can pertain only to the Creator - that is, the quality of giving existence to what did not exist before, and of producing from the darkness and filth of the mother's womb a creature as lovely and noble as man.

In adding to the phrase: اَلَّذِیْ خَلَقَکُمْ :"who created you" the words, وَالَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِکُمْ "and those before you," the verse shows that Allah alone is the Creator of all mankind. It is also significant that the verse mentions only "those before you" and not "those who will come after you", and through this omission suggests that there will not be any *Ummah* (a traditional community formed by all the followers of a prophet) to succeed the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, for no prophet will be sent down after the Last Prophet ﷺ, and hence no new '*Ummah*' will arise.

The final phrase of verse 21 لَعَلَّکُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ has been translated here as "so that you may become God-fearing". It may also be translated to mean "So that you may save yourselves from hell", or "So that you may guard yourselves against evil." But the point is that one can hope to attain salvation and paradise only when one worships Allah alone, and does not associate anyone else with Him.

Before we proceed, we must clarify a very important doctrinal point. The phrase (لَعَلَّکُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ) which has been translated here as "so that you may become God-fearing" employs the Arabic particle *l'alla* which indicates an expectation or hope, and is used on an occasion when it is not definite that a certain action or event would necessarily be actualized. Now, if one does really possess *'Īmān* (faith) and does really believe in *Tauḥīd*, one would, in consequence definitely attain salvation and go to Heaven, as Allah Himself has promised. But here the certainty has been expressed in terms of an expectation or hope in order to make man realize that no human action by itself and in itself can bring salvation as a necessary reward. One can attain salvation and go to Heaven only by the grace of Allah alone. The ablility to perform good deeds, and *'Īmān* itself is only a sign of divine grace, not the cause.

The next verse recounts some other qualities of Allah with regard to the act of nurturing, with the difference that while verse 21 spoke of the bounties of Allah pertaining to the human self, verse 22 speaks of those pertaining to man's physical environment. Since man's being basically has two dimensions, one internal (*Anfus*) and the other external (*Āfāq*), the two verses, in a summary way, encompass all the kinds of blessings that descend on man from Allah.

Among the cosmic bounties, the first to be mentioned is the earth which has been made a bed for man. It is neither soft and fluid like water on which one cannot settle, nor hard like stone or steel that should make it difficult to be harnessed for man's purposes, but has been given a middle state between the soft and the hard for man to utilize it conveniently in his daily life. The Arabic word, *Firāsh* (bed), which literally means 'somethings spread out', does not necessarily imply that the earth is not round, for the great globe of the earth, in spite of being round, appears to be flat to the onlooker, and the usual way of the Holy Qur'ān is to describe things in an aspect which should be familiar to an average man, literate or illiterate, city dweller or rustic.

The other bounty is that the sky has been made like an ornamented and beautiful ceiling. The third is that Allah sent down water from the sky. This, again, does not necessarily mean that water comes down directly from the sky without the medium of clouds - even in everyday idiom, a thing coming down from above is said to be coming from the sky. The Holy Qur'ān itself, on several occasions, refers to Allah sending down water from the clouds:

ءَ اَنْتُمْ اَنْزَلْتُمُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُوْنَ ٥

"Did you send it down from the clouds, or did We send it?" (56:69)

وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرٰتِ مَآءً ثَجَّاجًا

"And have sent down from the rain-clouds abundant water." (78:14)

The fourth bounty is to bring forth fruits with this water, and to provide nourishment to man from them.

The first three of these bounties are of an order in which man's effort or action, his very being even, does not enter at all. There was no

sign of man when the earth and the sky already existed, and clouds and rain too were performing their functions. As for these things, not even an ignorant fool could ever fancy that all this could be the work of a man or an idol, or of a created being. In the case of producing fruits and making them serve as nourishment for man, however, a simpleton may, on a superficial view, attribute this to human effort and ingenuity, for one can see man digging the earth, sowing the seed and protecting the plants. But the Holy Qur'ān has, in certain verses, made it quite clear that human effort has nothing to do with the act of growing trees and bringing out fruits, for human activity accomplishes nothing more than removing the hindrances to the birth and growth of a plant, or protecting it from being destroyed. Even the water which feeds the plant is not the creation of the farmer - all he does is to make the water reach the plant at the proper time in a proper quantity. The actual birth and growth of the tree, and the putting forth of leaves, branches and fruits is the work of Divine Power, and of no one else. Says the Holy Qur'ān :

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ ۝ أَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ

"Have you considered the soil you till? Is it you that give them growth or We ? " (56:63)

The only answer which man can find to this question posed by the Holy Qur'ān is that undoubtedly it is Allah alone who makes the plants grow.

In short, this verse mentions four qualities of Allah which cannot possibly be found in a created being. Having learnt from these two verses that it is Allah, and no one else, who brings man into existence out of nothingness, and provides the means of his sustenance through the earth, the sky, the rains and the fruits, one cannot, if one possesses a little common sense, help acknowledging that Allah, and no one else, is worthy of all worship and obedience, and that the ultimate iniquity is to turn away from Him who made man exist and gave him the means of survival and growth, and to prostrate oneself before others who are as helpless as man. Allah has put man at the head of all His creatures so that the universe should serve him, while he should totally devote himself to the worship and remembrance of Allah and obedience to Him without distraction. But there are men so

given to their indolence and ignorance that they forget the One God, and in consequence, have to serve a billion gods.

In order to rescue men from this slavery to others, the Holy Qur'ān says at the end of this verse:

فَلَا تَجْعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا وَّاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

"So, do not set up parallels to Allah when you know."

That is to say, once one has understood that, in reality, Allah alone is the Creator and the Provider, one will have also understood that no one else can be worthy of worship and of being associated with Allah as an equal or rival god.

To sum up, these two verses call men to what is the essential purpose of sending down all the Divine Books and all the prophets - *Tauḥīd*, or the affirmation and the worship of the one God.

Tauḥīd is a doctrine which has an all-pervading and radically transforming impact on every sphere of human life, internal as well as external, individual as well as collective. For, once a man comes to believe that there is only One Being who alone is the Creator, the Lord and Master of the universe, who alone is all-powerful and ordains the slightest movement of the smallest atom, and without whose will no one can harm or do good to another - such a man, rich or poor, in joy or sorrow, would always look only towards that One Being, and gain the insight to discover behind the veil of apparent causes the workings of the same Omnipotence.

If our modern worshippers of 'energy' only had some understanding of the doctrine of *Tauḥīd*, they would easily see that power resides neither in steam nor in electricity, but that the source of all powers is the One Being who has created steam and electricity. To know this, however, one must have insight. The greatest philosopher in the world, if he fails to see this truth, is no better than the rustic fool who saw a railway-train move at the waving of a green flag and stop at the waving of a red flag, and concluding that it was the power of the green and red flags that controlled the movement of the huge train, made an obeisance to them. People would laugh at the rustic, for he did not know that the two flags are merely signs, while the train is actually run by the driver, or, better still, by the engine. A more

perceptive observer would ascribe the function to the steam inside the engine. But he who believes in the One God would laugh at all these wise men, for he can see through the steam, the fire and the water even, and discover behind the appearances the might of the One and Only Being who has created fire and water, and whose will makes them perform their allotted functions.

The Doctrine Of *Tauḥīd* : A source of peace in human life

Tauḥīd, the most fundamental doctrine of Islam, is not a mere theory, but the only effective way of making man a man in the real sense of the term - it is his first and last refuge and the panacea for all his ills. For the essence of this doctrine is that every possible change in the physical universe, its very birth and death is subject to the will of the One and Only Being, and a manifestation of His wisdom. When this doctrine takes hold of a man's mind and heart, and becomes his permanent state, all dissension ceases to exist and the world itself changes into a paradise for him, as he knows that the enmity of the foe and the love of the friend equally proceed from Allah who rules over the hearts of both. Such a man lives his life in perfect peace, fearing none and expecting nothing from anyone: shower him with gold, or put him in irons, he would remain unmoved, for he knows where it comes from.

This is the significance of the basic declaration of the Islamic creed, or لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (there is no God but Allah). But, obviously, it is not enough to affirm the Oneness of God orally; one must have a complete certitude, and must also have the truth always present close to one's heart, for *Tauḥīd* is to see God as one, and not merely to say that He is one. Today, the number of those who can respect this basic formula of the Islamic creed runs to millions all over the world - far more than it ever did, but mostly it is just an expense of breath: their lives do not show the colour of *Tauḥīd*; or otherwise, they should have been like their forefathers who were daunted neither by wealth nor by power, awed neither by numbers nor by pomp and show to turn their back upon the Truth - when a prophet could all by himself stand up against the world, and say: ثُمَّ كِيْدُوْنِ فَلَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ :"So try your guile on me, then give me no respite" (17:195). If the blessed Companions and their successors came to dominate the world in a few years, the secret lay in

this *Tauḥīd*, correctly understood and practised. May Allah bless all the Muslims with this great gift!

Verses 23-24

وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّن
مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ O
فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَن تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ
وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ O

And if you are in doubt as to that which we have revealed to Our servant, then bring a Sūrah the like of this, and do call your supporters other than Allah, if you are true. But if you do not - and you never shall - then guard yourselves against the fire, the fuel of which are men and stones. It has been prepared for disbelievers. (Verses 23-24)

The Guidance which the Holy Qur'ān provides to man rests on two basic principles - *Tauḥīd* (the Oneness of God) and *Risalah* (Prophethood). The two preceding verses (21 and 22) affirm the Oneness of God in presenting certain acts peculiar to Allah alone as a proof; these two verses (23 and 24) affirm the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ in presenting the word of Allah as a proof. In both the places, the mode of argument is the same. The preceding verses mention certain things which no one could or can do except Allah - for example, creating the sky and the earth, sending down water from the sky, bringing forth fruits with water; and the point of the argument is that since no one except Allah can do these things, no one else can be worthy of being worshipped. These two verses refer to a kind of speech which cannot possibly come from anyone except Allah, and the like of which no human being can ever produce just as the helplessness of man and other creatures in the matter of creating the sky and the earth etc. is a demonstration of the fact that these are the acts of Allah alone, in the same way the helplessness of all created beings in the matter of producing something equal to or resembling the Word of Allah is a demonstration of the fact that this is the Word of Allah alone. Here the Holy Qur'ān challenges all men the world over, those of the

present and those of the future, to produce even a small passage like this, if they suppose it to be the work of a man, for other men may also be capable of accomplishing what one man has achieved. In case individuals should fail in such an effort, the Holy Qur'ān allows them the facility of calling to their aid all possible helpers - they could even hold an international 'workshop' for the purpose. The next verse forewarns them that such a venture would never succeed, and threatens with the fires of hell, for having once acknowledged his inability to produce something to equal the Holy Qur'ān, which is a clear evidence of its being the word, not of man but of a Being who stands above all created things, if a man still persists in his disbelief, he is only seeking a place in hell. The Holy Qur'ān asks men to beware of such a fate.

The Miraculous Qur'ān is a prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ

Thus, the verses, in emphasizing the miraculous character of the Holy Qur'ān, present it as the evidence of the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and of his truth. No doubt, the miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are innumerable, each more marvellous than the other, but in mentioning only one of these here - one that pertains to the sphere of knowledge, namely, the Holy Qur'ān - Allah has pointed out that this is the greatest. Even among the miracles of all the prophets عليهم السلام this particular miracle has a special distinction. It has been the way of Allah to show His omnipotence by manifesting some miracles through each prophet or messenger. But each miracle appears with a certain prophet, and ends with him. The Holy Qur'ān, on the contrary, is a miracle which is to survive till the end of time.

As for the phrase : وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ :"And if you are in doubt," we may remark that the verse employs the Arabic word, *raib* for 'doubt'. According to Imam Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *raib* signifies a kind of hesitation or indecision or suspicion which has no basis, and can therefore be easily overcome with the help of a little reflection. That is why the Holy Qur'ān says that having this kind of doubt (*raib*) is not consistent with being a man of knowledge, even if he were not a Muslim:

وَلَا يَرْتَابَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ

"So that the people of the Book and Muslims should have no doubt". (74:31)

Similarly, at the very beginning of the Sūrah Al-Baqarah the Holy Qur'ān refers to itself as the Book لَارَيْبَ فِيْهِ :"In which there is no doubt (*raib*)." In the present verse again it uses the word *raib* to say: وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِىْ رَيْبٍ :"if you are in doubt", the implication being that the truths enunciated by the Holy Qur'ān are so clear and evident that there is no room for any hesitation or indecision or suspicion to arise except for those who do not possess knowledge.

As for the people who hesitate in accepting the Holy Qur'ān as the Word of Allah, and suspect that it is the work of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or of some other man, the verse proposes an easy test - they should produce a passage (a Sūrah) resembling or equalling the Holy Qur'an in order to substantiate their claim; but if they fail, they should finally acknowledge the Holy Qur'an to be undoubtedly the Word of Allah. The Arabic word "*Sūrah*" means a "limited or definite piece"; as a technical term, a *Sūrah* is a passage of the Holy Qur'ān which has been set apart from other passages by Divine Commandment (*Waḥy*), there being 114 *Sūrahs* in the Holy Qur'ān, some long and others very short. The present verse uses the word *Sūrah* without the definite article "*Al*", and hence includes the shortest of the Sūrahs in the challenge thrown out to the doubters.

At this point, the objection can arise that the failure of one man or one group of men does not necessarily argue the inability of another man or group in the matter. The Holy Qur'ān meets this objection by declaring:

وَادْعُوْا شُهَدَآءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ

"And do call your supporters other than Allah, if you are true".

The Arabic word used here is *Shuhadā'*, the plural or *Shāhid* which signifies 'one who is present'- a witness is called a *Shāhid*, for he has to be present in the court of law. In this verse, the word *Shuhadā'* refers either to men in general - implying that the doubters could call to their aid any men whatsoever from anywhere in the world -, or specifically to the idols of the disbelievers of Makkah who thought that these blocks of stone would appear on the Day of Judgment as witnesses in their favour.

The next verse foretells that the doubters shall never succeed, even

if they tried with all their individual or collective might, in producing a passage which could resemble the Holy Qur'ān. If they should still persist in their denial, the verse threatens them with the fire of Hell, which has already been prepared for such stubborn disbelievers.

The infidels of Makkah, history tells us, were ready to give up their very lives for the purpose of obliterating Islam. In throwing out to them this challenge, the Holy Qur'ān gave them an easy chance of accomplishing their purpose, and even hurt their tribal sense of honour by predicting that they would never be able to take up the challenge. And yet not a single contender came up for the trial, which was a clear admission of their helplesseness and an acknowledgment of the Holy Qur'ān being the Word of Allah. This fact establishes the Holy Qur'ān as the evident miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Since the challenge still stands, the miracle too lives on, and shall live to the end of the world.

The Holy Qur'ān: A living miracle

As for the Holy Qur'ān being a miracle, the subject has been thoroughly discussed in scores of books by the greatest scholars in all the ages and in different languages. We may mention a few outstanding ones: *Naẓm al-Qur'ān* by *al-Jāhiz*, written in the 3rd century A.H.; *'I'jāz al-Qur'ān'* by Abū 'Abdullāh Wāsiṭi, written early in the 4th century; a small book, 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān' by Ibn 'Isā Rabbānī, written later in the 4th century; a long and comprehensive book, 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān' by Qādi Abū Bakr Bāqillānī, written early in the 5th century; the subject has also been discussed at length in well-known books like 'Al-Itqan' by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, 'Al-Khasā'is al-Kubra' by the same author, 'At-Tafsīr al-Kabir' by Imām Rāzī, and 'Ash-Shifa' by Qādī 'Iyad; more recently still, 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān', by Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i', and 'Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadi' by Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā; and finally 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān' by Shabbir Aḥmad Uthmānī. We may, in passing, draw attention to another peculiar quality of the Holy Qur'ān that, beside comprehensive and voluminous commentaries, scores of books have been written on different aspects of the Book of Allah and on the innumerable considerations which arise from it.

We cannot provide even a brief resume of all that has been written

on the subject, the literature being so vast. We shall, however, give a few brief indications as to why the Holy Qur'ān is held to be a miracle of the Prophet of Islam: صلى الله عليه وسلم

Qualities that make the Qur'an a miracle

(1) The Holy Qur'ān is incomparable for its comprehensiveness even among the Sacred Books of the world; on the one hand, it brings to man the ultimate knowledge of a metaphysical order, and, on the other, provides guidance for all the spheres of human life, spiritual or physical, individual or collective. Those who suspect the Book to have been the product of a human agency should remind themselves of the simple fact that it appeared at a time and in a place which offered no facilities for acquiring the kind of education which is necessary for composing such a book - in fact, the Arabs were in those days known as the *Ummiyyūn*, 'the illiterates', and that the Book came through the Holy Prophet ﷺ who could not even read or write, and who had not tried to learn even the arts of poetry and rhetoric on which the Arabs prided themselves. This fact, in itself, is nothing short of a miracle.

(2) The Holy Qur'ān is, no doubt, a guidance for all men without any distinction of time or place, but the first to be addressed were the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance. In affirming that no human being could produce even a few verses comparable to its own, the Holy Qur'ān did not confine the challenge merely to the richness of meaning and the quality of wisdom, but included the mode of expression as well. Now, the 'illiterates' of Arabia had no pretensions to wisdom or knowledge, but they certainly fancied themselves for their eloquence - to them, the aliens were just 'The Dumb' *(Al-'Ajam)*. And some of them were so mad in their hostility to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that, if they could see a chance of hurting him in doing so, they would readily have slit their own throats out of sheer spite. And yet no one came forward to accept the challenge. This helplessness in a contest which should have been easy for a people so gifted with a spontaneous eloquence - does it not argue that the Holy Qur'ān is not the word of man, but the Word of Allah? As a matter of fact, the most discriminating among the contemporary Arabs did admit, though in private, that the Holy Qur'ān was inimitable; some of them had the honesty to say so in public and some accepted Islam, while others in spite of this

admission, could not give up the ways of their forefathers, or sufficiently overcome tribal rivalries, particularly their hostility to Banū 'Abd Munāf, the tribe of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to embrace Islam.

Jalāl al-Din al-Suyūti has, in his 'Al-Khasā'is al-Kubrā', reported a number of incidents which illustrate the point. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Holy Qur'ān began to attract the attention of people even outside Makkah, the enemies of Islam became worried about the huge crowds that would assemble there for the annual pilgrimage and would be likely to fall under his spell. Their tribal chiefs wanted to find an effective strategem to prevent such a situation from arising, and they referred the problem to Walīd ibn Mughīrah, the eldest and the wisest among them. To begin with, they suggested that they could tell the pilgrims that the Holy Qur'ān was (May Allah forgive us for reporting a blasphemy) only the ravings of a lunatic. But Walīd could foresee that when the pilgrims heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ speaking with such lucidity and eloquence, they would immediately know that the allegation was not true. Next they thought of dismissing him as a mere poet. But Walid warned them that, an understanding of the arts of poetry being innate in most Arabs, the pilgrims would easily see that he was no poet. Then, they considered the possibility of putting him down as one of the soothsayers. But Walīd feared that they would again discover how false the imputation was, and would only turn against the accusers. In summing up his own impression of the Holy Qur'ān, he said: "By God, there is not a single man among you who knows more about Arabic poetry than me. And, by God, I find in this speech a kind of sweetness and grace which I have never found in the speech of any poet or of any eloquent man." After a good deal of thought, he finally advised them to accuse the Holy Prophet ﷺ of being a sorcerer who employed his black art in separating sons from fathers, and wives from husbands.

Exactly the same was the impression made by the Holy Qur'ān on many other people, who expressed similar views - for example, Nadr ibn Ḥārith, a tribal chief; Unais, the brother of the blessed Companion, Abū Dharr; As'ad ibn Zurārah, another tribal chief, and Qais ibn Nasībah of the Banū Sulaim tribe. Even the vilest enemies of the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم like Akhnas ibn Sharīq, Abu Sufyān and, of all persons, Abu Jahl himself are reported to have stealthily crept in the darkness of night to the house of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to hear him reciting the Holy Qur'ān, and to have been so entranced by the Word of Allah that they could not tear themselves away from the place till it was dawn. Yet they continued to be stubborn in their denial, for, as Abū Jahl confessed in so many words, they had been successfully vying with the tribe of Banū 'Abd Munāf in all possible virtues, but now that their rivals had produced a prophet, they could not come up with something to match the claim.

In short, the Arabs failed to take up the challenge of the Holy Qur'ān, and admitted their helplessness; nor has any one else succeeded in the attempt since then - all of which goes to show that the Holy Qur'ān can only be the Word of Allah, not of man.

(3) The Holy Qur'ān made many predictions about future events, and things turned out to be exactly as it had declared. For example, the infidels of Makkah were not prepared to believe the prophecy that the people of Rum, or the *Byzantians*, would finally rout the Persians after having suffered an initial defeat. The infidels made it a point of honour, and put a wager on it, but were humiliated to see the prophecy come true before the stipulated period of ten years was over.

(4) The Holy Qur'ān gives a clear account of some of the earlier prophets, of their Sharī'ah and of their peoples, and of many historical events since the beginning of the world. Even the best scholars among the Jews and the Christians did not possess such exact information. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , who had never attended a school nor been in the company of a learned man, could not have provided all these details for himself without having received the knowledge from Allah.

(5) Several verses of the Holy Qur'ān disclosed what certain people had tried to keep concealed in their hearts, and they had to confess that this was just what they had been thinking. We shall cite only two instances.

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّائِفَتَانِ مِنكُمْ أَنْ تَفْشَلَا

"When two of your battalions thought of falling away. . ." (3:122)

and ,

يَقُولُونَ فِيٓ أَنفُسِهِمۡ لَوۡلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا ٱللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ

"They say in their hearts, 'Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?'

(6) The Holy Qur'ān predicted that such and such men would not be able to do such and such things, and then it turned out that, in spite of having the power, they could not do these things. The Jews claimed to be the 'Chosen of God' and His friends. Since one is always eager to meet one's friends, the Holy Qur'ān asked them to substantiate their claim by wishing for death and for going back to Allah, but at the same time declared: وَلَن يَتَمَنَّوۡهُ أَبَدًا :"And they shall never wish for it" (62:7). Now, expressing a wish for death should not be difficult for anyone, if he wishes to establish his *bonafides*; for the Jews in particular, it would have been an easy way of refuting the Holy Qur'an. But, in spite of all their hatred for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they knew in their hearts that the Holy Qur'ān was the Book of Allah, and feared that if they told a lie in this matter, they would actually die. And they kept quiet.

(7) When the Holy Qur'ān is recited (in Arabic, of course), it affects in a strange and indefinable way the heart of even a casual listener, Muslim or non-Muslim. History reports many instances of people accepting Islam merely because they happened to be passing by when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was reciting the Holy Qur'ān - such was the case, for example, of the blessed Companion Jubair ibn Muṭ'im.

(8) The best book in the world, if read four or five times, begins to lose its charm even for the most fervent admirer. But the peculiar quality of the Holy Qur'ān, and of it alone, is that the more one reads or recites it, the more eager one becomes to do so again and again. Even among the sacred books of the world, the Holy Qur'ān is unique in this respect.

(9) The sacred books of many religions have been lost or no longer exist in an integral and authentic form. But Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'ān that He Himself will protect this Book, and preserve it against the slightest change upto the end of time. During the fourteen

centuries of the history of Islam, millions of copies, written by hand or printed, have been spread all over the globe as no other sacred book has been. But in this respect the greatest miracle of the Holy Qur'ān is that in all the ages and in all the places where Muslims have lived, there have been millions of people who have known the Book by heart without the alteration of a single consonant or vowel. So, Allah has preserved His Last Book not merely in the shape of written words, but, above all in the hearts of men. Allah is Ever-Living, so will His Word live for ever beyond the interference of created beings.

(10) There is no other book which should comprehend all the forms of knowledge and wisdom in so short a space as does the Holy Qur'ān, fulfilling all possible spiritual needs of man, and providing him with guidance for all the spheres of his internal or external, individual or social activity.

(11) It is not merely a theoretical guidance that the Holy Qur'ān has offered. Which other book, sacred or otherwise, has had such a vast and deep impact on the history of mankind in such a short time? Which other book has brought about such a radical change in the individual and collective life of millions of men within the space of a few years ? For when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم departed from this world, Islam had, in spite of all opposition and without the modern media of communication, already established a new order of life all over the Arabian peninsula, and within the next few decades the message of the Holy Qur'ān had reached India on one side, and Spain on the other. Can such pervasiveness be anything but a miracle?

Answers to some doubts

Before we leave the subject, we may also deal with certain doubts which have been expressed with regard to the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'ān. It has, for example, been suggested that some people, at one time or another, must have taken up the challenge of the Holy Qur'ān, and produced something comparable to it, but their compositions have not been preserved and have not come down to us. But the objection is fanciful. The number of people hostile to Islam

has, in any age, been much larger than that of Muslims, and they have possessed far greater and much more efficacious means of publicity than Muslims ever have. If any seemingly successful attempt had been made to produce an imitation of the Holy Qur'ān, it would not only have been preserved but also been widely publicised. After all, the infidels of Makkah used to bring all kinds of wild and fanatic charges against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. For instance, they accused him of having learnt all that he taught from the monk, *Buhīrā* whom he had met only once in Syria; or, they imputed the Holy Qur'ān to the authorship of a Roman slave who, being an alien, could not have been a master of the Arabic language and of the characteristically Arab form of eloquence - the Holy Qur'ān itself has reported this calumny. But even they, for all their venom, never pretended to have produced something resembling the Holy Qur'ān. Anyhow, whatever funny or flimsy attempts have been made to match the Holy Qur'an are on record in the books of history. For example, *Musaylama* of Yemen, known as the Great Liar, came out with a string of obscenities as a reply to the Word of Allah, but his own people dismissed them for what they were worth. At a later date, the famous man of letters, 'Abdullāh Ibn al-Muqaffa' thought of trying his wits against the Holy Qur'ān, but soon gave up in despair.[11]

The point, however, is that if someone had really produced even three or four verses comparable to those of the Holy Qur'ān, the matter could not have gone without being passed down to us at least by the enemies of Islam. Of late a different kind of objection has sometimes been raised. They say that the impossibility of successfully imitating a book does not by itself argue that it is the Word of Allah or a miracle, for poets like Shakespeare or Ḥāfiẓ too have never been imitated successfully. But a miracle is, by definition, something which occurs without the like means having been employed. Every poet or writer in the world, even the greatest, is known to have undergone a

11. A latter-day adventurist has been the Irish novelist James Joyce who congratulated himself on having faced up to the Challenge of the Holy Qur'ān in his "Finnegans Wake". Soon recognized to be at least very funny, this book can already be seen to be going up in a smoke of jokes.

process of education and training in his art, and to have made use of certain means and methods which are humanly possible. But the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, as we have said before, did not even know reading or writing, and was never interested in learning the arts of eloquence. Moreover, it is not merely a question of literary style. In considering the Holy Qur'ān as a miracle, we must, above all, take into account the spiritual efficacy and the transforming power it has, and which it has been showing these last fourteen hundred years.[12]

Verse 25

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِیْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوْا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقًا ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا
الَّذِیْ رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاُتُوْا بِهٖ مُتَشَابِهًا ؕ وَلَهُمْ فِیْهَاۤ اَزْوَاجٌ
مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۙ وَّهُمْ فِیْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ○

And give good tidings to those, who believe and do what is virtuous, that for them there are gardens beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are given a fruit from there to eat, they will say, 'this is what we have been given before'; and they are given one resembling the other. And for them there shall be wives purified; and there they are eternal. (Verse 25)

Verse 24 spoke of the fire of hell which has been prepared to

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12. We may conclude this discussion by quoting a passage from the well-known scholar of comparative religion and traditional civilizations, Frithjof Schuon: The superhuman value of a revealed Book cannot be apparent in an absolute fashion from its earthly form, nor from its conceptual content alone; in reality, the Divine and therefore miraculous quality of such a Book is of an order quite other than that of the most perfect dialectic or the most brilliant poetry. This quality shows itself first of all in a richness of meanings - a feature that is incapable of being imitated - and also in what might be called the underlying divine 'magic' which shines through the formal expression and proves itself by its results in souls, and in the world, in space and in time. Only this Divine substance can explain the spiritual and theurgic efficacy of the Qurā'nic verses, with its consequences in miraculously rapaid expansion of primitive Islam in the conditions in which it took place, as well as in the stability of Moslem institutions and the extraordinary fruitfulness of Islamic doctrine." ("Dimensions of Islam", London, 1970 page 55).

punish those who do not believe in the Holy Qur'ān; the present verse announces the reward for those who believe.

As for the fruits with which believers will be regaled in Paradise, some commentators say that this concerns only the fruits of Paradise which would be alike in shape, but each time different in taste. Others say that these fruits would resemble the fruits of the earth in shape alone, but their taste would be totally different. Anyhow, the point is that the believers would have a kind of joy in Paradise they had never known before, and that this joy would keep renewing itself at every moment.

Thus, the fruits of Paradise[13] may share a common name with the fruits of the earth, but they will be of a different nature.

The wives which the believers will have in Paradise, will be clean externally and pure internally - that is to say, free from everything that is physically disgusting like excrement and menstruation, and from everything that is morally disgusting like bad temper or unfaithfulness.

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13. We must sound a note of caution here. Our modernists have for some time been quite fond of asserting that in speaking of the fruits of Paradise and its other joys, the Holy Qur'ān has employed only a metaphysical mode of expression in order to suggest spiritual bliss which, by its very nature, is intangible. We do not mean to rule out the possibility or the desirability of analogical or symbolical interpretations of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, many authentic Muslim scholars, particularly the Sufis, have made such attempts which have proved to be very illuminating in many ways. But no genuine Sufi has ever claimed that symbolical interpretation *(I'tibār)* is the same thing as exegesis (*tafsīr*), or that his own interpretation was exclusively the only valid one. The purpose of analogical interpretation has always been to serve as an aid in spiritual realization or in the elaboration of metaphysical doctrines, and not to negate or oppose the regular mode of exegesis. What our modern exegetes overlook in their zeal and in their simplicity is the obvious fact that if a thing is being used as a metaphor or a symbol, it does not necessarily argue that it does not exist objectively. In allowing for symbolical interpretations, we must carefully remember that since the Holy Qur'ān has spoken of the fruits of Paradise and of similar things, they must have an objective existence, though not a physical one (in the current sense of the word), and even though we have no knowledge as to their nature and state - all of which we can safely leave to Allah Himself. That way lies security, for that is the Straight Path.

The joys of Paradise will also be unlike the joys of the earth in that they will not be short-lived, nor will one have to be trembling with the fear of losing them, for the believers shall live in perpetual bliss for ever.

In giving these good tidings to those who believe, the Holy Qur'an adds another condition - that of good deeds -, for without good deeds, one cannot deserve such good tidings on the merit of *'Īmān* (faith) alone. *'Īmān* itself can, no doubt, save a man from being consigned to the fires of hell for ever, and every Muslim, even if he is a great sinner, will finally be taken out of hell, once he has undergone a period of punishment. But no one can altogether escape the fires of hell unless he has been doing good deeds defined by the Sharī'ah. (Rūḥ al Bayān: Qurṭubī)

Verses 26-27

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ؕ
فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَٰذَا مَثَلًا ۘ يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا
وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ○ الَّذِينَ
يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ
أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ؕ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ○

Indeed, it does not embarrass Allah to use as a parable, a gnat or what exceeds it. Now, as for those who believe, they know it is the truth from their Lord; while those who disbelieve say, "What could have Allah meant by this parable?" By this He lets many go astray, and by this He makes many find guidance. But He does not let anyone go astray thereby except those who are sinful - those who break the Covenant of Allah after it has been made binding, and cut off what Allah has commanded to be joined, and spread disorder on the earth - it is these who are the losers. (Verses 26-27)

In the foregoing verses, it was affirmed that the Holy Qur'ān does not admit of any kind of doubt, and that if someone should have a suspicion as to its being the Word of God, he should try to produce even a small Surah comparable to it. These two verses refer to an objection raised by the disbelievers with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, and provide an answer to them. They had been saying that had the Qur'ān been the Word of Allah, it would not have employed contemptible creatures like an ant or a gnat in its parables, for such a thing goes against the sublimity and majesty of Allah, when it would embarrass even a man with some sense of dignity. The Holy Qur'ān points out that when one intends to speak of a detestable thing or person or situation, in a parable, the use of a gnat or something even more contemptible neither transgresses the principles of eloquence or logic, nor does it go against the sense of dignity or modesty, and hence Allah does not feel shy in using such imagery. The Holy Qur'ān also shows that doubts of this kind arise only in the minds of those whom their disbelief has drained of all power to see things in a proper perspective, while such empty misgivings never touch the minds and hearts of true believers.

Qur'ānic Parables: Test and guidance

The Holy Qur'ān proceeds to suggest even a *raison d'etre* for the use of such parables: they serve as a test for men. In the case of those who are ready to think and to understand, they become a source of guidance; but for those who refuse to understand, out of indifference or out of a stubborn hostility and denial, they are a cause of greater confusion and misguidance. In elaborating this point, the Holy Qur'ān specifies that these parables throw into confusion only those disobedient and rebellious people who disavow the covenant they have made with Allah, break all those relationships which Allah has commanded them to keep intact, and consequently produce an ever-widening disorder and anarchy in the world.

Who is *fāsiq* ?

The Arabic word used by the Holy Qur'ān in speaking of the disobedient is *Al-fāsiqīn*, its root being *fasaqa* which means 'to go outside or to stray beyond a limit'. In the terminology of the *Sharī'ah*, *fisq* signifies 'going beyond the circle of obedience to Allah, or

transgressing the commandments of Allah'. Now, transgression does not stop at being merely disobedient in one's actions, but can sometimes lead to outright denial and disbelief. So, the word *fāsiq* is applied to a disbeliever (*kāfir*) as well - such a use of the word is frequent in the Holy Qur'ān. A Muslim who is a habitual sinner is also called a *fāsiq* - this is how the jurists (*Fuqaha'*) ordinarily use the word, making the *fāsiq* a counterpart of the *kāfir* on the opposite side. That is to say, a man who commits a major sin and does not repent, or who insists on committing minor sins and makes it a habit, would be called a *fāsiq* in the terminology of the *Fuqaha'*; on the other hand, a man who commits such sins publicly and openly without being ashamed of it is called a *fājir*. (See Maẓharī)

Living by the Covenant with Allah

The Covenant which the transgressors disavow refers to the one that all men made with Allah before any of them came down to the earth. The Holy Qur'ān says that Allah brought together the spirits of all men, and asked them: أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ :"Am I not your Lord?" And they replied with one voice: بَلٰى : "Yes" (7:172). This acceptance and affirmation of Allah as their only Lord and Master requires that men should in no way be disobedient to Him. Allah's books and His prophets come down to the world to remind them of this Covenant, to renew it, and to teach them in detail how to act upon it. Now, those who break this Covenant, how can they ever be expected to learn from the prophets and the books of Allah?

Islamic concern about relationship to others

The cutting asunder of what Allah has commanded should be joined includes all kinds of relationships -- the one between Allah and His servant, the one between a man and his parents and relatives, between him and his neighbours and friends, between one Muslim and another, between one man and another. Actually, Islam means fulfilling one's obligations with regard to all these relationships, and this is also the way to follow the *Sharī'ah*. Deficiency in fulfilling these obligations produces all kinds of disorder among men, and thus the transgressors end up by being destructive for others and for themselves. It is these, the Holy Qur'ān says, who are the losers -- in this world as in the other.

Injunctions and related considerations:

(1) Verse 26 shows if one intends to explain something useful or essential for the spiritual guidance of one's readers or listeners, it is neither sinful nor reprehensible to refer to something which is generally supposed to be contemptible or dirty, nor does it go against the dignity of the writer or the speaker. Examples of the use of such images or parables occur in the Holy Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth*, and in the writings of the Sūfīs and other great Muslim scholars, all of whom have disregarded the habitual idea of modesty or seriousness in the interest of the real object to be attained.

(2) The reference to the disavowing of one's covenant with Allah indicates that the infringement of a contract or agreement made with one's fellow men is a grave sin, which may have the consequence of depriving a man of the ability to do good deeds.

(3) Verse 27 shows that it is essential for us to maintain the relationships which the *Sharī'ah* has commanded us to keep intact, and that it is forbidden to break them. Indeed, religion itself signifies the divinely ordained laws which bind us to fulfil our obligations with regard to Allah (*Huqūqullāh*) and with regard to His servants (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*). According to this verse, the fundamental cause of disorder in human society is the sundering of these relationships.

(4) The Holy Qur'ān says that real losers are those who go against divine commandments. There is a suggestion here that real loss pertains to the other world, the loss of this world being too small a thing to be worthy of serious consideration.

Verses 28-29

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ
يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ O هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ
وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ O

"How is it that you deny Allah despite that you were lifeless and He gave you life, then He will make you die, then make you live again, and then to Him you will be

returned? It is He who created for you all that the earth contains; then He turned to the heavens and made them seven skies -- and He is the knower of all things." (Verses 28-29)

The earlier verses affirmed the existence and the Oneness of Allah, and prophethood, giving self-evident proofs and refuting the whimsical and false notions of the doubters and the disbelievers. These two verses speak of the blessings which Allah has showered on man, pointing out that all the same there are men who do not recognize the bounty of Allah and persist in their denial -- the suggestion being that if they do not want to take the trouble of considering the arguments which have been advanced by the Holy Qur'ān in the earlier verses, they should, as every man with an undistorted nature must, at least be grateful to their benefactor, for even this would be a way of realizing why they should be obedient to Allah.

The first of these two verses refers to the blessings which are particular to the very being of man -- that is to say, he had no life before Allah gave him existence. The second verse refers to the general blessings which are common to man and other creatures -- firstly, the earth and all that it contains and on which man's life immediately depends, and secondly, the skies with which life on earth is directly related.

Verse 28 begins by expressing surprise at those who insist on being ungrateful to Allah and on denying Him. On the face of it, the disbelievers had never denied Allah but only the Holy Prophet ﷺ , all the same, the Holy Qur'ān equates such a denial with the denial of Allah Himself.

Then, the verse reminds man that once he was "dead" (*amwāt*), or that he had no life. He existed, if at all, in the shape of billions of lifeless particles aimlessly floating; Allah brought them together, made them into a man, and gave them life.

The verse proceeds to warn him that Allah will take away his life, and then give it back to him a second time. This second life refers to the Day of Judgment when Allah will collect the lifeless and scattered particles of each and every man again, and give him a new life. Thus,

the first 'death' or 'state of lifelessness' was at the beginning before man received life from Allah; the second death comes when a man completes the life-span allotted to him; and the second life will be given on the Day of Judgment.

The verse ends by telling man that he will ultimately go back to Allah. This, of course, refers to the Resurrection when all men will rise from their graves, will be assembled for giving an account of their deeds, and be finally punished or rewarded according to what they had been doing in the world.

According to this verse, the chief blessing of Allah for man is life, for without life he cannot profit from any other blessing. This is obvious enough. But the verse counts death too as a blessing. It is so, because physical death is the door to the perpetual life of the other world after which there is no death.

In recounting the blessings which man has received from Allah, verse 29 refers to Allah having created for man "all that the earth contains." This small phrase comprehends all kinds of benefits which accrue to him from the earth and its produce. Then, the verse speaks of the creation of the sky and its division into seven skies or heavens, as they are usually called in English. In this context, the Holy Qur'ān uses the Arabic word, *Istawā* which initially means 'to stand upright, to climb', and thence signifies 'to turn or pay attention to something', and, in a wider sense, 'to take a straight and firm decision which nothing can hinder'. The implication here is that Allah being Omniscient and Omnipotent, it was not at all difficult for Him to create the universe, once He had decided to do so.

The life in 'Barzakh'
(The period between death and resurrection)

(1) Verse 28 shows that a man who does not apparently deny Allah, but refuses to accept the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the Messenger of Allah, and the Holy Qur'ān as the Book of Allah, would still be counted among those who do not believe in Allah.

(2) Verse 28 mentions only one kind of life which is to follow one's physical death - that is, the life which will begin on the Day of Resurrection - but says nothing about the life in the grave, although

the Holy Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* explicitly speak of how people will be questioned about their faith in their graves, and will also receive some reward or punishment. Now, this life in the grave is something intermediary (*Barzakh*) between the life which man has in this world and one he will have in the other. In other words, it is a state in between the two, resembling the life one has while dreaming; it can be called a supplement to the life of this world as also a prelude to the life hereafter. In short, this intermediary life is not in itself a distinct entity, and hence need not be mentioned separately.

(3) According to verse 29, everything in the universe has been created for man. It means that there is nothing in the universe from which man does not derive some benefit in one way or the other, directly or indirectly. There are things which man uses physically as food or medicine; other things are useful for him without his knowing it; even poisonous or dangerous things do him some good; even things which are forbidden for him in one of their aspects, may in some other aspect be quite beneficial; finally, almost everything can serve to teach him a lesson or illuminate him in the interest of his life in the Hereafter. The great Sūfī Ibn 'Aṭā' remarks in connection with this verse: 'Allah has created the universe for you so that it should serve you and you should serve Allah. A wise man should thus know that he will certainly get what has been created for him, and should not, in worrying about it, forget the Being for whom he himself has been created' (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

(4) On the basis of verse 29, some scholars have come to the conclusion that since everything in the world has been created for man, it is essentially legitimate (*Ḥalāl*) and permissible (*Mubāḥ*) for man to make use of everything, except the things which have been forbidden by the *Sharī'ah*. So, the use of a thing is to be regarded as lawful so long as the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth* does not forbid it.

On the contrary, some other scholars say that the mere fact of a thing having been created for the benefit of man does not argue that it automatically becomes lawful to make use of it. So, the use of everything is essentially unlawful unless an explicit statement in the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth*, or an argument based on them establishes the use of a thing as legitimate.

There are still other authentic scholars who have not taken sides in this controversy. Ibn Hayyan, in his commentary 'Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ', points out that this verse does not provide a valid basis for either of the two views, for the letter *lām* in the phrase خَلَقَ لَكُمْ : *khalaqa lakum* indicates causation, signifying that the universe has been "created for your sake." So, one cannot draw any conclusion from the phrase as to the use of everything being essentially legitimate or illegitimate. The injunction with regard to the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of the use of particular things have been provided elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, and it is obligatory to follow these injunctions.

(5) Verse 29 shows that the earth was created before the skies, as indicated by the word, ثُمَّ : *Thumma* ('then'). Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān seems to be saying the opposite: وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ دَحٰهَا : "He spread out the earth after this." (79:30) But it does not necessarily mean that the earth was created after the skies. What it actually implies is that although the earth had already been created when the skies came into being, yet a final shape was given to it after the creation of the skies. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, etc.)

(6) According to verse 29, the skies are seven in number. This shows that the opinion of the ancient Greek astronomers and some Muslim philosophers, who used to speak of nine heavens, was no more than a conjecture.

Verses 30-33

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً ؕ قَالُوْٓا
أَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَنْ يُّفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ ۚ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ؕ قَالَ إِنِّيْٓ أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَعَلَّمَ اٰدَمَ
الْأَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْۢبِـُٔوْنِيْ بِأَسْمَآءِ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۝ قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ إِلَّا مَا
عَلَّمْتَنَا ؕ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝ قَالَ يٰٓاٰدَمُ أَنْۢبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ ۚ

فَلَمَّآ اَنْبَاَهُمْ بِاَسْمَآئِهِمْ ۙ قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۙ وَاَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُوْنَ ٥

And when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a deputy on the earth!" They said, "Will You create there one who will spread disorder on the earth and cause bloodsheds while we, along with your praises, proclaim Your purity and sanctify Your name?" He said, "Certainly, I know what you do not know." And He taught Ādam the names, all of them; then presented them before the angels, and said, "Tell me their names, if you are right." They said, "To You belongs all purity! We have no knowledge except what You have given us. Surely, You alone are the all-knowing, all-wise." He said, "O Ādam, tell them the names of all these." When he told them their names, Allah said, "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the skies and of the earth, and that I know what you disclose and what you have been concealing. (Verses 30 - 33)

The preceding verses recounted the general and some of the particular blessings of Allah, and asked man to recognize them and not to be ungrateful and disobedient to his Benefactor. Now, ten verses, beginning with the 30th, tell the story of the father of mankind, Ādam عليه السلام , in continuation of this theme and also by way of illustration. For, blessings are of two kinds - tangible and intangible. Food, water, money, houses, or lands are some of the tangible blessings; while honour, happiness or knowledge are intangible ones. The earlier verses were concerned with blessings of the first kind; these verses speak of those of the second kind - that is to say, how Allah bestowed the gift of knowledge on Ādam عليه السلام , made the angels prostrate themselves before him to show their respect, and gave men the honour of being his sons.

The creation of Ādam عليه السلام

The present three verses relate how Allah, having decided to create Ādam عليه السلام and to make him His deputy on the earth, spoke of it to the angels - seemingly by way of a trial, suggesting that they should

express their opinions in this matter. The angels submitted that they could not understand why men were being chosen to be the deputies, for some of them would shed blood and spread disorder on this earth. They thought that they themselves were more suited to perform this function, as the nature of angels is wholly good, no evil deed can possibly come out of them, they are totally obedient to Allah, and should hence be more capable of managing the affairs of the world. In replying to them, Allah first adopted the mode of authority, and told the angels that they knew nothing about the nature and the needs of deputation on the earth, and that Allah alone was the one to know it fully. The second answer was in the mode of wisdom - Ādam عليه السلام had been given preference over the angels on account of his superiority in the station of knowledge, because in order to function properly as a deputy on the earth one must know the names, the properties and the characteristics of the things to be found there, and the angels had no aptitude for this kind of knowledge.

(1) A question arises here as to why Allah chose to speak of His decision to the angels. Was it merely to inform them? Was it to seek their advice? Or, was it to make them express their opinion on the subject?

Why Allah discussed Ādam's creation with angels?

As for seeking advice, it is obvious enough that one turns for advice to wise and trustworthy people only when one cannot see all the aspects of a problem clearly, and does not want to depend on one's own knowledge and understanding alone, or when the rights of others are equal to one's own, and they too have to be consulted, as happens in the counsels of the world. Evidently, neither of the two situations obtain in the present case. Allah is the creator of the universe, and knows everything about the smallest particle of dust; He sees and hears everything, apparent or hidden. How can He stand in need of anyone's advice? Similarly, He does not run the universe under the parliamentary system, in which all have equal rights and everyone has to be consulted directly or indirectly. He is the Lord and Master, and all His creatures, be they men or angels, are His slaves - no one

has the right to question Him about His actions, and to ask Him why He did this or why He did not do that: لَا يُسْئَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْئَلُوْنَ : "He cannot be questioned as to what He does, while they are to be questioned." (21:23)

In fact, Allah did not mean to seek the advice of the angels, nor was there any need for it, but He, in His wisdom, gave a mere statement the form of a consultation in order to teach men the advisability of mutual consultation. After all, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a messenger of Allah, and all the information he needed in dealing with the affairs of the world could have been conveyed to him by means of revelation, and yet the Holy Qur'ān asks him to seek the advice of his Companions, so that the Islamic community should learn this lesson from him and the way of mutual consultation should be established through him. In short, this is the first *raison d'etre* of the mode of expression adopted by Allah. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

The other has been suggested by the Holy Qur'ān itself. Before the appearance of man, the angels had taken it for granted that Allah would not create a being who should be superior to them and greater in knowledge - as has been reported in a narration coming down from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās and cited by Ibn Jarīr in his commentary. But Allah knew that He would create a being who would be superior to all other creatures and greater than them in knowledge, and who would receive the gift of divine viceregency. So, Allah mentioned this in the assembly of the angels so that they may disclose what they had been thinking. Speaking according to their own lights, they very humbly submitted that a creature like man who carried within himself a tendency towards evil and disorder and who would not balk even at blood-shed, could not be expected to maintain peace and order on the earth, while they themselves, being free of all evil, and perfect in their obedience and devotion, could perform the function more satisfactorily. They did not mean to raise an objection to the choice which Allah had made, for angels are innocent of such sentiments; they were only being curious, and wanted to know the *raison d'etre* of such a choice.

To begin with, Allah gave them a very brief reply - إِنِّيْ أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ:

"I know what you do not know", implying that they are not aware of the nature and the requirements of divine viceregency, which had led them to suppose that only pure and innocent beings could fulfil the conditions necessary for such a responsible position.

Then, Allah demonstrated the truth to them in a vivid form. He gave to Ādam عليه السلام a kind of knowledge for which he alone had been endowed with the proper aptitude, and not the angels. That is to say, He taught him the names, the properties and qualities of all the existents, animate or inanimate. Angelic nature is not capable of such awareness - for example, an angel cannot really experience the pain of hunger and thirst, the tumult of passions, the torment from the bite of a scorpion or a snake, or the exhilaration from an intoxicant. Only Ādam عليه السلام had the capacity to learn such things, and he was taught to know them. Then, there is no indication in the Holy Qur'ān to show that he was taught in privacy, apart from the angels. It may well be that the teaching in itself was open to the angels as well as to him; his nature allowed him to receive it, and he learnt the lesson, while, they were impeded by their own proper nature, and could not. Or, it may be that the teaching did not take an external form at all, but that the Adamic nature was made to carry this particular kind of knowledge within itself without the need of a formal education, just as an infant does not have to be taught how to suck the mother's milk, or a duckling how to swim. As to the question why Allah, being omnipotent, did not change the nature of the angels and make them learn these things, we shall say that the question, in fact, boils down to this: Why did not Allah change the angels into men? For, if their nature had been altered, they would no longer have remained angels, but become men.

In short, through this demonstration Allah made the angels realize how wrong they were in supposing that He would not create any being superior to them in any way, and that they themselves were more suitable for being the viceregents of Allah than Ādam عليه السلام. Since they failed to name the things which Ādam عليه السلام could, they came to see that purity and innocence is not the criterion in choosing a deputy

or viceregent but the knowledge of the things which are to be found on the earth, of the ways of using them, and of the consequences which would follow from such a use.

We can also infer a general principle from the episode - it is necessary for a ruler to know fully the nature, the temperament and the peculiarities of the people over whom he is to rule, without which he cannot enforce justice and order. If one does not know the pain of being hungry, how can one deal justice to the man who has unjustly been kept hungry?

We may also point out that in expressing their opinion, the angels were neither raising an objection, nor being vain and proud, nor asserting their right; it was, on their part, only a humble submission, and an offer of their services. When they found that there was another being who was, with his special kind of knowledge, more suitable for the function, they as humbly acknowledged the fact and withdrew their earlier opinion in saying: سُبۡحٰنَكَ لَا عِلۡمَ لَنَآ اِلَّا مَا عَلَّمۡتَنَا اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَلِيۡمُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ : "To You belongs all purity! We have no knowledge except what You have given us. Surely, You alone are the all-knowing, the all-wise." In the present context, the phrase, "To You belongs all purity" also has the implication that Allah is free from the charge of having withheld from the angels the knowledge which He gave to Ādam عليه السلام , for, being the all-knowing and the all-wise, He gives to each creature the kind and the degree of knowledge and understanding which He, and He alone, knows to be in consonance with the specific nature of that creature.

Another question which may arise out of this episode is: How did the angels come to know that man would shed blood? Did they possess the knowledge of hidden things and of divine secrets? Or, was it a mere conjecture on their part? Most of the authoritative scholars believe, on the basis of certain آثار : '*Athār*' or reports available about the blessed Companions, that it was Allah Himself who had informed the angels on this occasion as to how man would behave on the earth. (See 'Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī'). It is only then that they became curious about the *raison d'etre* of man being chosen as the viceregent in spite of his propensity to evil

Beside demonstrating the superiority of Ādam عليه السلام in knowledge, Allah dispelled the misgivings of the angels with regard to the evil propensities in man by the short and simple answer, إِنِّىٓ أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ : "Certainly, I know what you do not know." There is a subtle suggestion here - what makes man fit for viceregency is just the peculiarity which, in the eyes of the angels, made him unfit for this function. For, a deputy or viceregent is needed on the earth just for the purpose of preventing blood-shed and disorder; if there is no possibility of disorder in a place, where is the need for sending there an administrator? Thus, it was the Divine Will and Wisdom that, just as Allah had created beings as innocent and sinless as the angels, or beings as totally evil as Satan and his progeny, or beings like the jinns in whom evil dominated over good, He would also create beings in whom good and evil should be equally mixed, who should try to conquer the evil in themselves and to grow in goodness so as to seek and attain the pleasure of their Creator.

Allah is the creator of the language

(2) This episode, according to Imām al-Aṣh'arī, shows that language as such has been created by Allah Himself, and not invented by man - its use by different kinds of men has later on produced the many forms of language.

(3) One should note a subtle suggestion here in the use of two words. In asking the angels for the names of things, Allah said, أَنۢبِـُٔونِى : "Tell Me"; but in commanding Ādam عليه السلام to do so, He said, أَنۢبِئْهُم : "Tell them." The difference in the mode of expression shows that Ādam عليه السلام was given the rank of a teacher, and the angels that of pupils. It is thus an indication of his superiority over them. Another thing the episode indicates is that an increase or decrease is possible in the degree of knowledge the angels possess, for they were given, through Ādam عليه السلام , at least a primary knowledge about a thing which they did not know before.

Man is the viceregent of Allah on the earth

(4) These verses tell us that a viceregent was appointed to keep order on the earth and to promulgate divine laws. From here we learn the basic principles for the governance of men on the earth. The

ultimate sovereignty in the universe belongs to Allah Himself, as is explicitly stated in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān: إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ : "Judgment belongs to Allah alone" (6:57); لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ : "The sovereignty of the skies and the earth belongs to Him alone" (9:116); أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ : "Verily, His is the Creation and the Command." (7:54)

But He has, in His wisdom, chosen to send His viceregents to the earth for maintaining spiritual and temporal order. Their function is to announce and promulgate divine commandments, to teach men how to abide by these laws, and sometimes even to exercise temporal power as well as spiritual authority under divine guidance. The appointment is made directly by Allah Himself, and is in no sense a reward for the good deeds or the spiritual effort of the individual concerned. There is a total consensus of all the authentic scholars of the Islamic *Ummah* on the doctrine that prophethood is not a thing which one can attain through one's personal effort or on the merit of one's good deeds, but that Allah Himself, in His supreme knowledge and wisdom, chooses certain individuals for acting as His messengers, prophets and viceregents. The Holy Qur'ān has explicitly declared it in several verses: اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ : "Allah chooses His messengers from among the angels and from among men; surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing" (22:75); اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ : "Allah knows best whom to entrust with His message" (6:124).

These viceregents receive divine commandments directly from Allah, and then promulgate them in the world. The chain of viceregents began with Ādam عليه السلام and continued in the same way upto the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ .

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was the last Caliph of Allah on earth

(5) The Holy Prophet ﷺ came to the earth as the last viceregent (*Khalīfa*), the last Messenger (*Rasūl*) and the last prophet (*Nabiyy*) of Allah, endowed with certain special qualities peculiar to him which he does not share with any other prophet. We may mention some of these characteristics:

(a) Each of the earlier prophets was sent for the guidance of a particular country or people, and his authority was limited to his jurisdiction alone, - for example, Mūsā and 'Īsā - (Moses and Jesus

Christ (عليهم السلام) were sent to Banī Isrā'īl (the Israelites). But the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent for the guidance of all the men and all the jinns, and his authority extends to all the members of the two species. The Holy Qur'ān has declared the universality of his prophethood in these words: قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنِّى رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا ٱلَّذِى لَهُۥ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ : "Say: O mankind, I am the messenger of Allah to you all, of Him to whom belongs the sovereignty of the skies and of the earth" (7:158). A *ḥadīth* of the *Sahīh* of Muslim reports the Holy Prophet ﷺ as having said that he had been made superior to all other prophets in six things. The first of these is, of course, the universality of his prophethood.

(b) Just as the viceregency and prophethood of all the earlier prophets was limited to particular peoples and countries, in the same way it was also limited to specific periods; when the age of one prophet was over, another prophet would come to take his place as the new viceregent. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ has been sent by Allah as the last of all prophets; his prophethood is not circumscribed within a specific period, but shall last till the end of time.

(c) It has so happened that the teachings and the Sharī'ah of each of the earlier prophets would remain intact for a time, but then gradually people would start deviating from them and distorting them till they became unrecognizable; at this stage Allah would send a new prophet with a new Sharī'ah. But the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to remain alive in its integral form upto the end of the universe. Allah has taken upto Himself the responsibility of protecting the words and the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ

"It is We who have sent down the Remembrance (i.e. the Holy Qur'ān) and We are its Protector" (15:9).

Similarly, He has made a special provision for the preservation of the *Ḥadīth* which contains the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that is to say, in spite of all the vicissitudes of time there shall remain till the Doomsday a group of people who will preserve these teachings and transmit them accurately to others, and who will receive help and protection from Allah Himself. Since Allah has ordained the survival

of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, there is obviously no need for a new prophet or messenger or viceregent and no room for a new Sharī'ah.

(d) Contrary to the case of all the earlier prophets, the prophethood and viceregency of the last of them, Muḥammad ﷺ, is not limited to a particular period, but is to continue upto the end of time, and those who succeed him for the preservation of spiritual and temporal order in the world, are to be, not the viceregents of Allah, but the viceregents of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his deputies. A *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim both says:

كانت بنو إسرائيل تسوسهم الأنبياء ، كلما هلك نبى خلفه نبى وانه ، لانبى بعدى وسيكون خلفاء فيكثرون

"The Israelites were governed by their prophets. When a prophet died, another would come to take his place. And beware, no prophet is to come after me. Of course, there will be my deputies (*Khulafā'*), and there will be many of them."

The issue of Caliphate after the Holy Prophet ﷺ

(e) Allah has ordained that after the Holy Prophet ﷺ his *Ummah*, or the Islamic community, shall as a body enjoy the privilege which has been that of the prophets عليهم السلام. That is to say, the *Ummah* as a collective body has been declared to be innocent and under the special protection of Allah Himself, so that it will never unanimously agree upon a doctrinal error or a deviation, and hence any decision which has been arrived at in religious matters through the consensus of the *Ummah* is to be regarded as manifestation of Divine Commandment. That is why the consensus of the *Ummah* has been accepted as the third source of the *Sharī'ah*, the first two being the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith*. For the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself said, لن تجتمع امتى على الضلالة :"My *Ummah* shall never collectively agree upon error." And we have already referred to another *ḥadīth* which tells us that no matter how much the world has changed or how indifferent people have grown to the Truth, there shall always remain in the Islamic *Ummah* a group of people who will defend and preserve the Truth, and who will finally win.

(6) Since it has been ordained that the Islamic *Ummah* as a body

shall never go wrong, the responsibility of choosing a deputy to the Holy Prophet ﷺ has also been entrusted to it. Now, for the governance of the earth the legitimate way is that the *Ummah* should select a *Khalīfah* who, once chosen, would solely be responsible for the maintenance of spiritual and temporal order. And it is also possible that there should be a single *Khalīfah* for the whole world.

The first to succeed the Holy Prophet ﷺ as his deputies were the First Four Great *Khalīfahs*, known as *al-Khulafā' al-Rashidūn* (or the rightly-guided ones, commonly translated as the 'Orthodox Caliphs'), and the *Khilāfāt* order functioned according to the proper principles upto the end of their time. So, their decisions are not merely temporary judgments, but have a permanent legislative value, and carry an authority in their own degree, for the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, عليكم بسنتي و سنة الخلفاء الراشدين :'Follow my way steadfastly, and the way of the rightly-guided *Khalifahs*.'

After the age of the rightly-guided *Khalīfahs*, different rulers appeared in different regions, but none of them can be described as a *Khalīfah* of the whole Islamic community in the proper sense of the term, though they may be called the *Amīrs* of particular regions. When it became practically impossible for all the Muslims of the world to agree upon one man as their *Khalīfah*, and it became customary to have a separate *Amīr* for each region, people accepted the principle that the man who had been chosen or acknowledged by the majority of the Muslims in a country, should be called the *Amīr* of that country. The basis for this procedure has been provided by the Holy Qur'ān itself: وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ :"And they conduct their affairs by mutual consultation" (42:38).

The modern legislative assemblies are a form of mutual consultation, with the difference that they are quite free to make whatever laws they like according to their own opinion, while an Islamic legislative assembly, its members and their *Amīr* all shall be bound by the law which Allah has sent us through the Holy Prophet ﷺ. There are certain specific conditions for the membership of an Islamic assembly as well as for the choice of an *Amīr*. And, most

important of all, laws must be made within the bounds of the basic principles laid down by the Holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, the authority of which the assembly cannot have the right to question.

Let me give a brief summary of the whole discussion. The verses which tell us of how Allah informed the angels about his intention to send a viceregent to the earth, provide us with some of the fundamental principles of the governance of man:-

(a) The sovereignty of the skies and of the earth belongs to Allah Himself.

(b) The function of promulgating the Commandments of Allah on the earth is performed by a viceregent who is at the same time a messenger of Allah and His Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

(c) The chain of such viceregents ends with the Holy Prophet ﷺ , for he is the last Messenger and Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

(d) Now the function of viceregency is performed by the deputies of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

(e) Such a deputy (*Khalīfah*) is to be chosen by the *Ummah* or Islamic community.[14]

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14. (1) Some Modernists have zealously taken to the habit of interpreting these verses as implying that man as a viceregent of Allah is required to make a 'progress' in 'Science' - that is, in the empirical study of physical phenomena; a so-called 'Muslim' translator of the Holy Qur'an has even had the temerity to translate the name 'Ādam' by the English word 'Man', thus denying the existence and prophethood of Ādam عليه السلام . In order to dispel such grave errors and distortions of word and meaning, let us point out that the 'names' which Allah taught to Ādam عليه السلام do not refer merely to the chemical or biological or psychological properties of things and men, but to their essential qualities and aptitudes - we are using the word 'essential' in the technical and metaphysical sense of the word in which it was originally used in the West too. Maulana Ashraf Alī Thānavi adds in his 'Bayān al-Qur'ān' that the knowledge of the 'names' even includes a knowledge of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah as to the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful. Then, there are many great Sūfis who maintain that Ādam عليه السلام was given the knowledge of 'the names of Allah' - not of all the divine names in detail, of course, for it is not possible for a created being to comprehend the Infinite, but of divine names in a summary form. This interpretation

Continued

Verse 34

وَاِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ اَبٰى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ O

And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam!" So, they prostrated, all but Iblis. He refused, and joined the infidels." (Verse 34)

The episode recounted in the foregoing verses has shown how the angels came to learn that Adam عليه السلام was superior to them in so far as he possessed the forms of knowledge necessary for the function of

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has been advanced by as authentic a commentator as Qadi Thanaullah of Pānipat in his 'Tafsīr al-Maẓharī'. In the explanation of this subtle point we may say that every thing that exists reflects some divine attribute, which in its turn is a manifestation of a divine name; thus, divine names are the essential principles or roots of all things, and one who knows divine names does also know things in their inner natures.

(2) With regard to the question of the viceregency of Allah, we cannot pass over a very serious distortion of the authentic doctrine which has been introduced by the Modernists and seems to be growing in currency. Under the influence of Western Humanism, and specially in their indifference to doctrinal matters, the Modernists have come to identify the prophet and the father of mankind, Ādam عليه السلام totally with the biological species called 'man', and have made out as if every individual member of this species, unconditionally and without any qualifications, is born to be a viceregent of Allah. The error has been promoted by a thoughtless misreading of *Sufi* metaphysical texts and *Sufi* poetry. What our Modernists have never cared to learn is the concept of degrees and their distinctions. The Sufis, no doubt, often speak of 'man' as being the viceregent of Allah, but what they are actually referring to is not a biological organism or species, but '*Al-Insān Al-Kāmil*', 'the Universal Man' - a term which the orientalists have wrongly rendered as 'the perfect man', thus introducing ethical implications in the sphere of pure metaphysics. In the writings of the Sufis, prose and poetry both, 'Man' also stands for 'the Total and Essential Reality of man' (*Al-Ḥaqīqah al-Jāmi'ah al-Insāniyyah*). Now, the Universal Man par excellence is the Holy Prophet ﷺ this is the first degree of "manhood" to which belong the *Aulia*' (Men of Allah or the great saints) and those rulers who dealt justice according to the *Sharī'ah.*

Then, there are lower degrees pertaining to the pious and the virtuous Muslims down to the lowest degree where stand people who are sinful, yet, being Muslims, can hope for salvation. Allah alone knows best as to

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divine viceregency, while they themselves did not, nor did the jinns. Now, Allah willed to manifest this superiority in a visible and concrete form. So, He commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Ādam عليه السلام in his honour. They obeyed except Iblis or Satan who, in his pride, refused to do so.

If we go by the words of the Holy Qur'ān, the command was given to the angels alone, but, in excepting Iblis from those who obeyed, the text also suggests that the command was given to all the created beings that existed at that time and possessed understanding, including the jinns as well as the angels. But the Holy Qur'ān mentions the angels alone, because when superior beings like the angels were required to show their respect for Ādam عليه السلام, inferior creatures like the jinns must, it goes without saying, have been ordered to do the same.

Angels prostrate before Ādam

(1) In this verse, the angels have been commanded to prostrate themselves before Ādam عليه السلام. Another verse of the Holy Qur'an tells us that the parents and the brothers of Yūsuf (Joseph) عليه السلام on reaching Egypt, prostrated themselves before him (12:100). Evidently such a prostration cannot have been intended as an act of worship, for worshipping anyone other than Allah is an act of association (*Shirk*) and infidelity (*Kufr*), and hence cannot possibly be allowed by any

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who belongs to which degree; below the degree of the blessed Companions one can never speak with certitude. If we allow ourselves to associate vicreregency with an ordinary Muslim, it would only be viceregency, so to say, by reflection, just as the *'Īmān* of every Muslim is only a reflection of the *'Īmān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Any way, the necessary condition of receiving even a faint reflection of viceregency and "Manhood" is that one should be a Muslim, for, as the Holy Qur'ān has explicitly declared, 'Allah shall not now accept any faith except Islam.' As for attributing viceregency of "Manhood" to common man as such is concerned, it can at best only be viceregency, to use Aristotelean terms, in potency and not in act - it cannot be effective unless it is actualized through a total submission to the *Sharī'ah* and a strenuous spiritual effort and waiting upon the grace of Allah. In fact, the highest excellence open to man now is to be in word and deed and thought a perfect follower of the *Sunnah*, the way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Sharī'ah. So, it appears that in the days of the ancient prophets prostrating oneself before somebody must have been just an act of courtesy or a way of showing one's respect, and enjoyed the same value as we do in our own days things like a simple greeting, a hand-shake, the kissing of hand, or standing up in someone's honour. Imam Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* that it was permissible in the *Sharī'ah* of the earlier prophets عليهم السلام to prostrate oneself in honour of one's elders, but that the *Sharī'ah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden gestures like prostrating oneself, or bowing down very low or standing with one hand placed on the other in the manner of the *Salāh* before someone, all of which may suggest an act of worship, and has allowed only greeting (*Salām*) and hand-shake as a gesture of courtesy or respect.

It is easy to understand the *raison d'etre* of such a prohibition. Association, infidelity and the worship of anyone other than Allah are things which in their nature go against the very principle of *'Īmān* (faith), and cannot therefore be tolerated by any *Sharī'ah*. There are, however, certain acts and gestures which are not in themselves acts of 'association' or infidelity, but may, on account of the ignorance or indifference of people, become a prelude to 'association' and infidelity. So, the Sharī'ahs of the earlier prophets did not forbid such acts in an absolute manner, but prevented them from being used as the instruments of 'association' and infidelity. For example, making pictures of living things is not in itself an act of 'association' or infidelity, and was hence permissible in the earlier Sharī'ahs. In speaking of how the jinns used to serve Sulayman عليه السلام (Solomon) the Holy Qur'ān itself says: يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِيبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ :"They made for him whatever he liked - places of worship, and pictures." (34:13) Similarly, prostrating oneself before somebody as a gesture of respect was permissible in the earlier Sharī'ahs. But gradually the practice opened the way to 'association' and infidelity on account of people's ignorance and thoughtlessness, and even caused grave distortions in the Sharī'ahs of different prophets, which had to be rectified by other prophets and other Sharī'ahs.

Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the last of all the prophets and messengers of Allah, and his *Sharī'ah* is the last of all Sharī'ahs and is

to remain valid upto the end of time, Allah has, in order to protect it against all distortion, stopped every chink through which 'association' or idolatry could possibly enter. That is why this *Sharī'ah* has strictly forbidden all those practices which had at one time or another served as a means towards 'association' or idol-worship.

For example, making pictures of living things has been totally banned; prostrating oneself before somebody, even as a mark of respect, has been forbidden; it is not permissible to offer one's *Salah* (prayer) at those hours of the day which the infidels had reserved for worshipping their gods, for even this slight and external correspondence might lead to 'association'; and, according to a *Ḥadīth* reported by Muslim, one is not allowed to call one's slave an "*'abd*", nor is a slave allowed to call his master a "*rabb*" - the words respectively signify "a slave" and 'one who gives nurture', and are as such harmless, but they can be misconstrued, and may mislead ignorant slaves or helpless and subjugated people into the worship of their masters: hence the prohibition.

With regard to the question of prostration, we may add that, according to some authentic scholars, *Salāh*, the basic form of Islamic worship, comprises of four kinds of actions - standing upright, bowing, sitting down, and prostrating oneself; the first two of these, standing up and sitting down, are actions which one habitually does in the course of one's daily chores, and which one also performs as acts of worship in the course of a *Salāh* (prayer), but the other two, bowing down and prostrating oneself, are actions which one does not go through as a matter of habit, and which are characteristically associated with *Salāh* (prayer) and *'Ibādah* (worship); hence it is that the Islamic *Sharī'ah* has identified them with acts of worship, and forbidden the Muslims to bow down or prostrate themselves before anyone other than Allah.

Given that the Holy Qur'ān itself speaks of prostration as a mark of respect, one would wish to know on what grounds it has been affirmed that the Islamic *Sharī'ah* has forbidden this practice. As to this question, we may point out that several well-known narrations coming down to us from the Holy Prophet ﷺ through quite a large number of his blessed Companions, are there to establish that

prostrating oneself before somebody as a mark of respect is unlawful (*harām*). To cite only one such narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that, if he could allow people to prostrate themselves before anyone other than Allah as a mark of respect, he would have commanded wives to prostrate themselves before their husbands. This clearly shows that prostration as a mark of respect is absolutely forbidden, and no allowance can, in this respect, be made in favour of any created being. We may add that the *Ḥadīth* we have just referred to has come down to us through twenty Companions, while, according to Tadrib al-Rawi, the famous book on the fundamentals of the science of *Ḥadīth*, a Tradition which has been reported by only ten Companions is called *Mutawātir*, and enjoys the same authority in the matter of injunctions as the Holy Qur'ān.

(2) The Holy Qur'ān describes Iblīs or Satan as an infidel. His infidelity does not arise from disobedience in his action, for, according to the *Sharī'ah*, giving up an obligation in practice is only a sin and a transgression, and does not constitute infidelity. Iblīs became an infidel, because he had defied and challenged a divine commandment, and had, in refusing to prostrate himself, virtually said that, in his opinion, Ādam عليه السلام was not worthy of it.

(3) Iblis had attained such a high degree in science and knowledge that he was called *Tā'ūs al-Malā'ikah* :"The Peacock Among the Angels." How did he, then, come to commit such a suicidal error? Some scholars say that it was because of his pride and vanity that Allah took back from him the wealth of knowledge and understanding, and hence he came to act like an ignorant fool. Others have suggested that his error was due to self-love and ambition. The famous commentary, 'Rūh al-Bayān' resolves the question by quoting a line of verse in Arabic which shows that once the aid of Allah has been withdrawn from a man, he can no longer save himself from sins, and all the effort he makes only serves to push him farther and farther into misguidance. May Allah, in his mercy, save all of us from such a fate! The commentary draws from it the conclusion that one should not be vain about one's learning or one's deeds or even about one's *'Īmān* (faith), for *Īmān* is valid only if it lasts till one's final breath and into the first stage of one's journey to the other world.

Verses 35-36

وَقُلْنَا يٰاٰدَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَ زَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوْنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ O
فَاَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ عَنْهَا فَاَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيْهِ وَقُلْنَا
اهْبِطُوْا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّ
مَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ O

And We said, "O Ādam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat at pleasure wherever you like, but do not go near this tree or you shall join the transgressors." Then, Satan caused them to slip from it, and brought them out of where they had been. And We said, "Go down, you all, some of you enemies of some; and on the earth there will be for you a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." (Verses 35 - 36)

This is a continuation of the story of Ādam عليه السلام . When his superiority over the angels and his fitness for the role of viceregent had been announced to the angels and been acknowledged by them, and Iblis had been condemned as an infidel and expelled from Paradise on account of his pride and his defiance of divine authority, Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهما السلام (Eve), his wife, received a command from Allah to live in Paradise and enjoy its blessings. But they were also instructed not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. Now, having been disgraced because of Ādam عليه السلام , Iblīs or Satan had an account to settle with him, and as soon as he got the opportunity, he tricked them into eating from this tree. Because of this error on their part, they too were ordered to leave Paradise, and to go down and live on the earth. They were at the same time warned that their existence on the earth would no longer be full of perpetual bliss as it had been in Paradise, but that there would be dissension and enmity among men, their progeny, which would spoil the joy of earthly life.

Since these events took place after Ādam عليه السلام had been created and the angels had been commanded to prostrate themselves before him, some scholars have concluded from it that the creation of Ādam عليه السلام and the prostration of the angels took place somewhere outside Paradise, and that he was sent there later on. But the words of the Holy Qur'ān do not exclude the other interpretation that both the

events took place in Paradise, but that he had not been told at that time where he was to live, which was done later.

When Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهما السلام were sent to live in Paradise, they were allowed to eat whatever they liked 'at pleasure' - the Arabic word in the text being '*Raghadan*', which signifies provision for which one does not have to work, and which is never exhausted nor falls short. Thus, their life was totally free from all care.

They were commanded not to go near a certain tree - which was an emphatic way of asking them not to eat its fruit. The tree has not been given a specific name either in the Holy Qur'ān or in the *Hadith*. Some commentators say that it was wheat, others say that it was a fig-tree or a grape-vine. But it is not really necessary to make specific what the Holy Qur'ān has left vague. (See Qurtubi) [15]

According to the Holy Qur'ān, it was Satan who 'caused them to slip' (*azallahumā*). It clearly shows that the error and disobedience of Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام was not of the kind which technically constitutes a sin, but arose out of a misunderstanding produced by Satan. They ate the forbidden fruit, because Satan had cleverly deceived them. [16]

A question arises here as to how Satan got into Paradise for seducing Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام, when he had already been expelled from there for refusing to prostrate himself. There are many possible ways in which he can have played his trick. Possibly he never

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15. Even the Bible does not name the tree. As to the apple being the fruit concerned, it is only a popular misunderstanding arising from the fact that the Latin word "*Malum*" means an "apple" as well as a "sin, or evil."

16. We may note that in the previous episode the Holy Qur'ān used the name Iblīs - a word which comes from the root Balas, 'to be disappointed', and hence signifies "one who has lost all hope of receiving the grace of Allah." In the present episode he has been called *Al-Shayṭān* - a word which comes from the root *Shatn*, "to be far away", and hence signifies "one who has been removed far away from the mercy of Allah." Iblīs is a proper name, while *Shayṭān* is the name of a genus. When the Holy Qur'ān speaks of *Al-Shayṭān*, it always refers to Iblis. But the common noun *Shaytan*, or its plural *Shayaṭīn* refers to the genus, which includes men and jinns both. It would be interesting to add that the root *Shayt* means 'the excess of anger and rage', and may possibly be the basis of the word *Shayṭān*.

met them, but planted the suggestion in their minds from afar - a thing which Satan can always do, and of which we have a specimen in the work of the hypnotists. It is equally possible that Satan, being one of the jinns whom Allah has given certain unusual powers denied to man, assumed the shape of a snake or of something else, and thus succeeded in entering Paradise. Perhaps it was because of this disguise that Ādam عليه السلام did not remember Allah's warning that Satan was his enemy. According to the Holy Qur'ān, Satan assured them on oath that he was one of their well-wishers (7:21). It apparently suggests that he did actually meet them, and speak to them face to face.

The Holy Qur'ān says that Satan فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا :"brought them out" of the state in which they had been living. In actual fact, they were 'brought out' under a divine command, but since Satan served as a means and as an intermediary, the action has been attributed to him.[17]

In commanding Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام to go down from Paradise, Allah also said, بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ: 'Some of you (shall be the) enemies of some.' If Satan had not been turned out of the skies till then, he is included in this address, the implication being that the enmity between Satan on the one hand, and Ādam and Hawwā' عليهما السلام and their progeny on the other, would continue on the earth too. But if Satan, as some scholars maintain, had already been expelled, then the addressees are Ādam and Hawwā' عليهما السلام and their progeny; the implication would now be that Ādām and Hawwā' عليهما السلام would have to undergo a double punishment, firstly that of being banished from Paradise, secondly that of seeing enmity arise among their children which must make life unpleasant for parents. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

They were also told that the earth would be a temporary dwelling-place for them, and that they would have to leave it too, which also meant that they would not find real peace of mind there.

Ādam and Hawwa in Paradise

(1) In allowing Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام to eat at pleasure, and

17. The words of the Holy Qur'ān do not in the least imply that Satan had any power whatsoever to act on his own. So, any Manichean dualism is totally out of the question.

in forbidding them to go near the tree, Allah used, according to the text of the Holy Qur'ān, the verbs for the dual number, thus including both in the address. But in asking them to live in Paradise Allah did not address both of them, but said: أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ : "You and your wife." This form of address yields two legal principles: (a) the husband is responsible for providing a dwelling-place for his wife (b) for the purpose of dwelling the wife is dependent on the husband, and she must live in the house in which her husband lives.

(2) In this context the Arabic word *'uskun* (live) suggests that their stay in Paradise was to be temporary, not permanent which is a usual condition for the ownership of a house. Allah did not say that Paradise had been given to them, but only asked them to live there, for Allah knew that certain things were going to happen on account of which they would have to leave this dwelling-place. Moreover, the right to 'own' a dwelling-place in Paradise is earned through *'Īmān* (faith) and good deeds, which one can acquire only after the Day of Judgment. The *Fuqahā'* (jurists) have derived from it the principle that, if a man asks someone to live in his house, the other man does not thereby acquire the ownership of the house nor the right to a permanent stay. (Qurṭubī)

(3) In allowing Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام to eat at pleasure, Allah used the verb for the dual number, and said: " كُلَا " meaning 'eat both of you'. This indicates that in the matter of food the wife is not subservient to her husband, but can eat whatever she needs or likes, as can the husband.

(4) Allah also allowed them to eat from wherever they liked. This shows that man has the right to move freely from one place to another according to his needs or wishes.

(5) Allah did not want them to eat the fruits of a certain tree, but as a precautionary measure He commanded them not to approach it even. It is from here that the *Fuqahā'* have derived one of the basic principles of Islamic law, which requires that the things or actions which are likely to serve as means to sin or as its instruments are equally forbidden. That is to say, there are certain things which are

not forbidden in themselves, but when there is a danger that in making use of them a man would become involved in an unlawful activity, they too have to be forbidden.

The Prophets are innocent of all sins

(6) As we have seen here, Ādam عليه السلام had been forbidden to eat the fruit of a certain tree, and had also been warned against the machinations of his enemy, Satan, and yet he had eaten the forbidden fruit. It is seemingly a sin, while the Holy Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth* and rational arguments too establish the innocence and sinlessness of all the prophets. There is an absolute consensus of the four great Imams of Islamic law and of all the authentic scholars on the doctrine that each and every prophet is innocent of and protected against all sins, major or minor. Some people have suggested that prophets are not protected against minor sins, but the majority of authentic scholars does not agree with this opinion. (Qurṭubī) It is necessary for prophets to be thus protected, because they are sent down to be the guides of men - if a guide can go against the commandments of Allah and commit a sin, major or even minor, people would no longer be ready to trust his word or deed. If one cannot have trust and faith even in the prophets, how can the work of spiritual guidance be possible? Hence the necessity of prophets being sinless.

The Holy Qur'ān does, however, relate certain incidents which tend to suggest that a certain prophet committed a sin, and drew upon himself the displeasure of Allah. The story about Ādam عليه السلام eating the forbidden fruit is one such instance. According to the consensus of the authentic scholars, in all cases a prophet comes to commit an error through a misunderstanding or just forgetfulness, and it is never a deliberate and wilful transgression of divine commandment. As is well-known, a *Mujtahid* is one who possesses the necessary qualifications for finding out through analogical deduction the rule for a case regarding which no specific commandment is present in the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth*; if he makes a mistake in determining the rule, he still receives a reward from Allah for having made the effort. The mistake made by a prophet is always of this nature, or is due to oversight and hence pardonable, and cannot be called a 'sin' in the technical sense. Moreover, a prophet, being under the protection of Allah, can never

show oversight or forgetfulness in things which are directly concerned with his prophetic and legislative function, but only in personal matters. (See al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The station of the prophets, however, is so exalted, that even a little oversight on the part of a great man is considered to be a great error. That is why such slips on the parts of certain prophets have been described in the Holy Qur'ān as 'sins', and Allah has shown his displeasure too, although they are not 'sins' in their nature.

As for the error committed by Ādam عليه السلام commentators have advanced several explanations:-

(a) A certain tree was pointed out to Ādam عليه السلام as being forbidden. But it was not this particular tree alone that was intended, but all the trees of this kind. The *Ḥadīth* too relates a similar case. Holding a piece of silk and some gold in his hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that those two things were forbidden to the men in his *Ummah*. Obviously the ban does not apply to these very pieces of silk and gold alone, but to silk and gold as such. But it is quite possible for someone to imagine that only the particular pieces which the Holy Prophet ﷺ held in his hand were forbidden. Similarly, Ādam عليه السلام thought that the prohibition applied only to the particular tree which had been pointed out to him. Satan exploited this misunderstanding, and assured him on oath that, being a well-wisher, he could never advise him to do something which was wrong or harmful, and that the forbidden tree was quite different, and not the one from which he was asking him to pluck a fruit.

(b) Satan may have suggested to Ādam عليه السلام that the prohibition was valid only upto a period after he had been created, just as infants are denied heavy food till they have grown up, and that since Ādam عليه السلام had now grown stronger, the ban too had been lifted.

(c) It is equally possible that, when Satan told him that if he ate this fruit, the eternal bliss of Paradise would be guaranteed for him, Ādam عليه السلام forgot the prohibition. This verse of the Holy Qur'ān seems to give credence to such a possibility: فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا : "Ādam

forgot, and We did not find him steadfast." (20:115)

Anyhow, the essential point is that Ādam عليه السلام did not deliberately and wilfully disobey Allah; all that he did was an act of oversight or the kind of mistake which a *Mujtahid* can make. The error was not, properly speaking, a sin, but Ādam عليه السلام being so close to Allah, and in view of his station of a prophet, even this lapse was regarded as very serious, and described as a 'sin' in the Holy Qur'ān. But the Holy Qur'ān tells us that when he repented and prayed for pardon, Allah forgave him.

Verses 37-39

فَتَلَقّٰٓى اٰدَمُ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَلِمٰتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيْمُ ۝ قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّىْ هُدًى
فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۝ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝

Then Adam learnt certain words (to pray with) from his Lord; so, Allah accepted his repentance. No doubt He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful. We said, "Go down from here, all of you. Then, should some guidance come to you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. As for those who disbelieve, and deny Our signs, they are the people of the Fire - they shall be there forever." (Verses 37-39)

Ādam's prayer to Allah

The earlier verses have related how Ādam عليه السلام came to commit an error through the seduction of Satan, and how he was commanded to leave Paradise and to go down to the earth. He had never experienced the displeasure of Allah before, nor heard such words of reproach. He could not bear it, and in the tumult of remorse at once wanted to beg humbly for pardon. But he was also afraid that by being importunate he might draw on himself more displeasure. Then, being a prophet, he knew Divine Majesty as ordinary men cannot. So, the fear and the awe dumbfounded him, and he could not utter a word. But Allah knows what passes through men's hearts, and He is also the

Most-Merciful and the Most-Generous. Seeing the agony of remorse in Ādam عليه السلام , Allah accepted his repentance, and his grace taught him the words of a prayer so that he could beg for pardon.

Thus pardon was granted to Ādam عليه السلام but Divine wisdom had all the same its own plans in sending him down to the earth - for example, starting through his progeny a new species, man, to be placed between the angels and the jinns; submitting men to the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* by giving them the power of choice, however limited; instituting divine viceregency among them, and promulgating among them the prohibitions and the commandments of the *Shari'ah*, so that this new creature may be capable of making a spiritual progress and of attaining a station denied even to the angels. Allah had announced these purposes even before creating Ādam عليه السلام , when He said to the angels: إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً : "I am going to create a deputy on the earth." (2:30)

Descension of Adam was not a punishment

That is why the command for Ādam عليه السلام to go down to the earth was not withdrawn even when he had been pardoned: only the mode was now altered. Earlier the command had been given in the mode of authority, and the sending down to the earth intended as a punishment: hence the reference to the enmity among men. Now, it was in the mode of wisdom, and the sending down to the earth, an honour - the honour of viceregency. Hence the reference to things viceregency involves. In commanding Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام and their progeny to live on the earth, Allah told them that He would be sending down to men His guidance - that is, the injunctions of the Sharī'ah - through revelation, and that those who follow it faithfully shall be free from sorrow and anxiety - in other words, they shall not have to grieve about any loss in the past, nor to worry about some misfortune in the future.

In speaking of how Allah taught Ādam عليه السلام the words of a prayer so that he could offer his repentance properly, the Holy Qur'ān uses the word *Talaqqa*, which means 'accepting and welcoming a person or thing eagerly', and thus indicates his attitude in receiving the phrases. (See Kashshāf and Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

As to what these phrases were, different things have been reported from different Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, but the generally accepted report is that of the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, رضی اللہ عنہ according to which these phrases are just the ones which the Holy Qur'ān cites in a different place: رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (7:23)

The Arabic word for repentance is *taūbah* which means 'a return'. So, *taūbah* is not merely an emotional attitude as the English word, 'repentance' seems to suggest. The word *taubah* is used with reference to Allah as much to men. When the word *taubah* is employed in case of a man, it signifies a necessary combination of three things:

(a) Acknowledging one's sin as a sin, being ashamed of it and feeling remorseful.

(b) Giving up the sin altogether.

(c) Making up one's mind firmly never to indulge in it again.

If any one of these three elements is missing, the *taubah* is not genuine. Thus, it is not enough for one's salvation merely to utter the words of repentance, unless the words are supported by remorse for the sins committed in the past, abstinence from them in the present and determination of not giving way to them in the future. So much for the use of the word *taubah* with reference to man.

In the present passage, the Holy Qur'ān uses the word with reference to Allah, and the phrase concerned literally signifies 'Allah returned to Adam'. It means that Allah again turned to him with His mercy and grace, and accepted his *taubah*.

Injunctions and related considerations :

(1) Asked as to what a man should do if he happens to have committed a sin, several great scholars and Sūfis have been saying that he should do exactly what his first parents, Ādam and Hawwā علیہما السلام did - that is, he should be sincerely ashamed of his deed, make up his mind never to indulge in it again, and pray to Allah for His pardon as

they had: رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِينَ :"Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (7:23) The prayer of Mūsā (Moses) عليه السلام was of the same nature: رَبِّ إِنِّى ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِى فَاغْفِرْ لِى :"My Lord, I have wronged myself. Forgive me." (28:16) And when Yūnus (Jonah) عليه السلام made a mistake, he too prayed: لَّآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ إِنِّى كُنتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِينَ "There is no God but You. Pure are you. I have certainly become one of the unjust." (21:87) (See Qurṭubī)

(2) As we have seen in the previous verses, the Holy Qur'an attributes the error of judgment to Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام both by using the verb *azallahuma* which indicates the dual number and thus means that Satan 'caused both of them to slip.' In recounting how Allah commanded them 'to go down' to the earth, the Holy Qur'ān again uses the verb for the plural number, thus including Hawwā عليها السلام in the command. On the contrary, in speaking of the *taubah* (repentance) of Ādam عليه السلام and the acceptance of his *taubah* by Allah, verse 37 mentions him alone, and, employing the verb for the singular, leaves out Hawwā عليها السلام . Even in other places, the Holy Qur'ān attributes the error to Ādam عليه السلام alone - for example, وَعَصٰىٓ اٰدَمُ رَبَّهٗ : 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord.' (20:121)

A possible explanation for the omission of Hawwā عليها السلام in such a context is that Allah wants woman to be kept hidden from prying eyes, and, in order to provide a cover for her, has not referred to her explicitly while speaking of sin and divine wrath. But when it comes to the question of *taubah*, the prayer which Allah taught to Ādam عليه السلام employs a verb in the plural number - "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves", and thus the Holy Qur'ān leaves no room for the supposition that the error of Hawwā عليها السلام was not pardoned, or that she did not offer repentance. Moreover, woman being inclusive to man in most situations, it was not necessary to mention her specifically every time the story was told. (Qurṭubī)

(3) The Arabic word *Taubah* signifies much more than the English word 'repentance'; similarly, the words *Tā'ib* and *Tawwab* mean much more than simply 'one who repents.' Imam Al-Qurṭubī says that the word *Tawwāb* is used with reference to Allah as well as to man.

For example, the Holy Qur'ān applies the word to man in the phrase: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ : "Surely Allah loves those who repent" (2:222) - and in *al-tawwabin*, 'those who return to Allah'; on the other hand, it speaks of Allah too as *al-Tawwāb* : هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ :"He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful." (2:37) So, with reference to man, the word signifies 'one who turns away from disobedience and sin, and returns to obedience', while with reference to Allah it signifies 'one who accepts repentance, and turns to man with mercy and grace'. There is another word, *Tā'ib* which also means 'one who returns', but it is not permissible to use this word with reference to Allah. For, in the case of Allah, only those nouns, adjectives and epithets are permissible which have been used in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* - all other words are disallowed, no matter what their lexical meanings are.

(4) Verse 37 shows that Allah alone has the authority to accept a man's repentance and to forgive his sins. By disregarding this principle, Jews and Christians fell into a great error, for they came to believe that if a priest or a saint forgave their sins, Allah too did the same. Even some ignorant Muslims behave as if they too entertain such a belief. But all such notions are doctrinally false. No religious scholar or saint, *'ālim* or *murshid*, has the authority to forgive sins; all he can do is to pray for the sinner, and seek Allah's pardon.

The obedient are freed of worries

(5) Verse 38 promises two great rewards to those who follow divine guidance - they will have no fear, and they will not grieve. Fear is the anxiety one feels in apprehending some trouble or pain in the future. Grief is the sorrow arising from the loss of something valuable or from one's failure in attaining a desired object. One can see that these two rewards comprehend all the possible forms of comfort and peace. Then, the text of the Holy Qur'ān makes a subtle distinction between the two. In saying that those who follow divine guidance will have no fear, it speaks in general terms and uses a noun - the Arabic phrase: لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ is to be translated literally as 'no fear upon them'. But in the next phrase وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ , the Holy Qur'ān employs a verb, placing before it a pronoun as the subject. The literal translation of the

phrase is: 'they shall not grieve'. The implication here is that being totally free from all sense of loss is possible only to Men of Allah or the saints [18] who follow divine guidance in all its details; as for the others, no man whether an emperor or a billionaire, can help being grieved at the loss of a valued object or the frustration of a desire, all of which is but a necessary part of the scheme of things. The 'friends of Allah' do not have to grieve, because they annihilated their own desires and their very will in submitting themselves totally to the will of Allah. The Holy Qur'ān also tells us that those who go to Paradise will thank Allah for having removed from them all regret and sorrow: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ : "All praise belongs to Allah who has put away all sorrow from us" (35:34). It means that some degree of sorrow is inevitable for every human being except those who have perfected and made fast their relationship with Allah.

Let us make it clear that the verse does negate all grief and sorrow in the case of the 'friends of Allah', but the negation applies only to the loss of worldly things and the frustration of worldly desires. As for the anxiety about the other world and the fear of Allah and the deep sense of awe before His Glory, the 'friends of Allah' are far ahead of other men in these. It has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ often appeared to be worried and in deep thought - this was not for fear of any trouble or loss in the worldly sense, but on account of his anxiety for his *Ummah*, and of his awe before Divine Glory.

Nor does this verse imply that prophets and saints should not feel the instinctive and all too human fear when confronted by things which are generally known to inspire dread. The Holy Qur'ān itself relates how the prophet Mūsā (Moses) علیہ السلام was struck with fear when his stick turned into a dragon: فَاَوْجَسَ فِىْ نَفْسِهٖ خِيْفَةً مُّوْسٰى : "Musa felt a fear in himself." (20:67)

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18. The word "Saints" is very weak and only an approximate translation of the Arabic phrase "Awliyā-Allah", 'the friends of Allah' - a concept which has only a faint resemblance with the Christian idea of a 'saint'. Consequently, the term 'men of Allah' has been used most frequently throughout this commentary.

But it was only an instinctive and physical fear, and the incident anyhow belongs to the early days of his prophethood, for when Allah said: لاتخف : 'Do not be afraid', the fear disappeared altogether. We may explain the incident in another way also. His fear did not arise as it does in the case of ordinary men, from the apprehension of some harm or hurt from the dragon, but from the likelihood that the extraordinary event might lead the Israelites into misguidance. So, this fear was not worldly, but other-worldly.

Verses 40-42

يٰبَنِيٓ إِسۡرَآءِيلَ اذۡكُرُوا نِعۡمَتِيَ الَّتِيٓ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَوۡفُوا
بِعَهۡدِيٓ اُوۡفِ بِعَهۡدِكُمۡ وَاِيَّايَ فَارۡهَبُوۡنِ ۝ وَاٰمِنُوۡا بِمَآ اَنۡزَلۡتُ
مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمۡ وَلَا تَكُوۡنُوۡٓا اَوَّلَ كَافِرٍۢ بِهٖ وَلَا تَشۡتَرُوۡا
بِاٰيٰتِيۡ ثَمَنًا قَلِيۡلًا وَّاِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُوۡنِ ۝ وَلَا تَلۡبِسُوا الۡحَقَّ بِالۡبَاطِلِ
وَتَكۡتُمُوا الۡحَقَّ وَاَنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝

O Children of Isra'il (the Israelites), remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and fulfil the covenant with Me, so I fulfil your covenant, and have awe of Me alone. And have faith in what I have revealed, confirming what is already with you, and do not be the first to deny it, nor take a paltry price for My signs. And fear Me alone. And do not confound truth with falsehood, and do not hide the truth when you know. (Verses 40 - 42)

The Sūrah Al-Baqarah begins by speaking of the Holy Qur'ān itself, and tells us that although it provides guidance to all men, yet only true Muslims will derive a full benefit from it. The Sūrah proceeds to warn the disbelievers against the grievous punishment which awaits them in the other world, and also to delineate the misdeeds of the two kinds of disbelievers - those who deny openly, and the hypocrites. Then, addressing all the three groups, it urges upon them to worship Allah alone, and, presenting the Holy Qur'ān as a miracle which cannot be imitated by man, invites them to have faith in it. Next, the Surah recounts how Ādam عليه السلام was created to be

the viceregent of Allah, and thus shows the omnipotence and wisdom of Allah so that men may realize why they must obey and worship Him and never be disobedient to Him.

Now, in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ there were two kinds of people among the disbelievers and the hypocrites. On the one hand were *mushrikin*, idolaters and associators who did not possess any religious knowledge, were even otherwise mostly illiterate, and followed the customs of their forefathers - for example, the inhabitants of Makkah in general whom the Holy Qur'an calls the *Ummiyyūn* (the illiterate). On the other hand were those who believed in the earlier prophets, had a knowledge of the earlier Divine Books like the Torah and the Evangile, and were known as being well-educated. Some of them were the followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Moses), but did not accept Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام (Jesus) as a prophet - these were the *Yahūd* or the Jews. Others were the followers of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, but did not believe that Sayyidna Mūsā عليه السلام was, being a prophet, divinely protected against all sin - these were the *Nasārā* or the Christians. On account of their belief either in the Torah or the Evangile or in both, the Holy Qur'ān calls these two groups *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the people of the Book). Being well-educated, they were respected and trusted by the people around them, and their opinion had a great deal of weight. If they came to the straight path, others too could be expected to follow their example.

The Jews predominated in Madinah and its environs. The Sūrah Al-Baqarah is also Madinite. So, after dealing with the idolaters and associators, it addresses the people of the Book in a special manner, from verse 40 to verse 123. Adopting a persuasive and friendly tone, the Surah refers to the noble family to which they belong and the honour which they receive from the people on account of such an affiliation; then, recounting the blessings which Allah has been showering on them, it asks them to be aware of their many misdeeds and their sins, and invites them to come to the Straight Path. All this has been said, to begin with, in a very brief manner - four verses inviting them to Islam, and three to good deeds. Then comes a long and detailed address to them, at the beginning of which, as also just before the end, occur the words, *yā Banī Isra'il* (O children of Israel) -

the repetition is, of course, the usual rhetorical device for making the speech persuasive.

Isra'il is a Hebrew word, signifying 'the servant of Allah'; it is also the second name of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) علیه السلام . Certain scholars have remarked that among the prophets it is the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone who has several names, except for Sayyidnā Ya'qūb علیه السلام who has two names, Ya'qūb and Isra'īl. The Holy Qur'ān addresses the Jews here, not as the "Children of Ya'qūb", but as the "Children of Isra'il", so that the title may remind them that they are the children of the 'the servant of Allah', and hence they should follow the example of their father in worshipping Allah alone and in obeying Him.

In verse 40, Allah asks the Israelites to fulfil His covenant - that is to say, the one they had made with Allah. According to Qatadah and Mujāhid, the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān refers to this covenant which had been mentioned in Torah as well (For the Covenant, see Exodus, ch. XXXIV) (165):

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآئِيْلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ۖ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ
اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ ۖ لَئِنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِيْ وَعَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ
وَاَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ

Allah made a covenant with the children of Isra'il, and We raised up from among them twelve chieftains. And Allah said, 'I am with you. Surely, if you perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and believe in My messengers and help them, and lend to Allah a good loan, I will forgive your evil deeds, and I will admit you to gardens underneath which rivers flow' (5:12).

The covenant mentions acts like prayers and alms, but the most important clause is having faith in all the messengers of Allah including the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Hence, according to the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, the covenant here signifies having faith in and obeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ (See Ibn Jarīr).

As for Allah fulfilling their covenant, the verse we have just quoted (5:12) makes the meaning clear - Allah will forgive the sins of those who fulfil the terms of the covenant, and will admit them to Paradise. Verse 41 makes it quite explicit that according to the covenant it is

obligatory for the Israelites to have faith in the Holy Qur'ān, for, after all, it has been sent down to confirm the essential teachings of the Torah. Now, the Israelite scholars were afraid that if they told the truth in this matter, they would be going against the public sentiment, and thus lose their adherents and income both. So, these three verses exhort them to speak the truth without fear, for Allah alone is worthy of being feared.[19]

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) Al-Qurṭubī remarks in his Commentary that Allah, in asking the Israelites to worship and obey Him, reminds them of the bounties and blessings He has showered on them, but in the case of the followers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم He asks them to do so without mentioning His bounties: فَاذْكُرُونِيْٓ أَذْكُرْكُمْ : "Remember Me, I will remember you." (2:152)

This is a subtle suggestion which brings out the superiority of this *Ummah* over the others - the Islamic *Ummah* has a direct relationship with Allah, for it begins by recognizing the Benefactor, and through this knowledge recognizes His bounties; other peoples, on the contrary, begin by recognizing the bounties, and proceed through this medium to a knowledge of the Benefactor.

(2) Verse 40 shows that it is obligatory to fulfil the agreement one has entered into, and it is forbidden to break one's promise. The injunction has been stated explicitly in another verse: أَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ : "Fulfil your agreements." (5:1)

According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim, those who break their promises would, before being finally punished in the other world, be humiliated before the whole human race when it assembles together on the Day of Judgment, for a flag would be placed as a stigma beside everyone who has committed this sin, and the bigger the crime, the higher would the flag be.

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19. Let us add that what the Holy Qur'ān confirms with regard to the Torah and the Evangile is the fact that they are the Books of Allah. As for the distortions which have from time to time been introduced into them, they are no part of the original texts, and hence the question of confirming such interpolated passages does not arise.

(3) Verse 41 asks the Israelites not to be the first to deny the Holy Qur'ān, although being a disbeliever is in itself the ultimate sin, whether one be the first or the last. The verse, in fact, suggests that the man who is the first to deny and disbelieve will not only incur the sin of his own denial but also bear the additional burden of the sin of misleading all those who follow his example; and will thus have to undergo a multiple punishment.

It follows from here that the man who is in any way responsible for others falling into any kind of sin will have to bear the burden of this sin along with the sinners; similarly, the man who in some way helps others to do a good deed will receive a reward for it along with them. Several verses of the Holy Qur'ān and the *aḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم repeatedly stress this point.

(4) Verse 41 warns the Israelites against taking a paltry price for His signs or verses (the Arabic word, *Āyāt* has both the meanings). The context makes it clear that it is forbidden to take money from people by misinterpreting or concealing the verses of the Book of Allah in order to please them or to serve their worldly interests. There is an absolute consensus of the *Ummah* on this point.

(5) As for the question of taking a wage for teaching the verses of the Holy Qur'ān or for reporting them correctly, verse 41 is not concerned with the matter. But it is an important question in itself whether it is permissible to accept wages for teaching the Holy Qur'ān. There is a divergence of views among the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) in this matter. Imām Mālik, Imām al-Shāfi'i and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, consider such wages to be permissible, while the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other jurists hold them to be impermissible, for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has forbidden the use of the Holy Qur'ān as a means of livelihood. But there has been a radical change in the circumstances since then. Formerly, those who taught the Holy Qur'ān used to receive a subsistence allowance from the *Baytul-Māl*, or the public exchequer of the Islamic state. But since Islamic society fell into a disorder,[20] they lost their financial support. The teaching of the Holy Qur'ān to children being a full-time job, the teachers could

20. Through the onslaught of Western imperialism and other factors.

not turn to difficult professions without interrupting this essential chain of transmitting the Word of Allah from generation to generation. In view of this situation, the jurists of the Hanafi school declared it permissible to accept wages for teaching the Holy Qur'ān. According to *Hidayah*, the famous book of *Hanafī* code, this should be the rule (*fatwā*) these days. Later jurists have extended the permission to similar duties like leading *Salāh* (*Imāmah*), calling for prayers (*Adhān*), teaching the *Ḥadīth* and the *Fiqh*, etc., for they are related to the teaching of the Holy Qur'ān, and the survival of Islām equally depends on them. (See al-Durr al-Mukhtār, al-Shāmī)

(6) The famous Ḥanafī scholar Shāmī has, in his commentary on "al-Durr al- Mukhtār" and in his own book "*Shifāl-'Alīl*", explained in great detail and with convincing arguments that the later jurists have allowed the acceptance of wages for the teaching of the Holy Qur'ān etc. only in view of an essential religious need which must be fulfilled, or the whole Islamic order would be disturbed; hence the permission should be limited only to such essential needs. It logically follows from this principle that paying or receiving wages for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān for transmitting the reward to the dead or in the interest of some worldly purpose is forbidden, for it fulfils no essential religious need. Thus, the man who recites the Holy Qur'ān for wages in this manner and the man who pays him for it both commit a sin. When there is no merit earned in such a recitation, how can it be transferred to the dead? Al-Shāmī refers to many authoritative works like "*Tāj al-Sharī'ah*", 'Aynī's commentary on *Hidāyah*, the marginal notes by *Khayr al-Dīn Al-Ramalī* on "*al-Bahr al-Rā'iq*", etc., and specially cites *Al-Ramalī* to the effect that practices like paying for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān beside the grave of a dead man or elsewhere in order to transmit the reward to him, have never been reported from the blessed Companions or their immediate successors or from other great scholars of the early centuries of Islām, and are hence an innovation (*Bid'ah*) in religion.

(7) Verse 42 explicitly shows that it is not permissible to mix truth and falsehood together in such a way that the addressee falls into a confusion as to what the truth is, and that it is forbidden to conceal the truth because of fear or greed.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has, in his commentary, related a very illuminating story in this context - a story which has come down to us through a chain of reliable reporters, and has been taken from the "Musnad" of Darimi.

During one of his visits to the Holy town of Madīnah, the Ummayyid Caliph Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Mālik wanted to meet someone who had lived with a Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, if such a man was still alive. On being informed that Abū Ḥāzim was the only man of this kind left in the town, he sent for him .

The Caliph said to him, "Abū Ḥāzim, why have you shown such discourtesy and disloyalty?"

"How have I been discourteous or disloyal to you?"

"Everybody who is anybody in Madīnah has come to see me, but you haven't", complained the Caliph.

"O chief of the Muslims, may Allah protect you against saying something which is not true to the fact", replied Abū Ḥāzim "You have not been familiar with my name before today, nor have I ever seen you. Things being what they are, how could I come to meet you? Is it disloyalty or discourtesy?"

The Caliph looked around questioningly. Imām Zuhrī spoke up: "Abū Ḥāzim is right, and you are wrong."

Changing the subject, the Caliph asked: "Abū Ḥāzim, how is it that I don't like to die?"

"The reason is simple," Abū Ḥāzim said "You have made your world flourish, and turned your habitation in the other world into a desert. Naturally, you don't like to leave a flourishing city for a desert."

The Caliph admitted that it was true, and came out with another question: "What would it be like when we have to appear before Allah tomorrow?"

Said Abū Ḥāzim, "The man who has been doing good deeds will present himself before Allah like the man who returns from a travel to his loved ones, while the man who has been doing evil deeds will

appear like the slave who had run away and has now been brought back to his master."

The Caliph burst into tears, and said with a sigh, "I wish we could know how Allah would deal with us."

Abū Hāzim replied, "Assess your deeds in the light of the Book of Allah, and you will know."

"Which verse of the Holy Qur'ān can help us to do so?"

"Here is the verse: إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ : "Surely the righteous shall be in bliss, and the transgressors shall be in a fiery furnace." (82:13-14)

The Caliph remarked: "Allah's mercy is great; it can cover even the wrong-doers."

Abū Hāzim recited another verse: إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ : "Surely the Mercy of Allah is close to those who do good deeds." (7:56)

The Caliph advanced another question: "Tell me, Abu Hazim, who is the most honorable among the servants of Allah?"

"Those who are mindful of their fellow-human beings, and possess the right kind of understanding to know the truth."

"Which is best among good deeds?"

"Fulfilling the obligations laid down by Allah, and keeping away from what He has forbidden."

"Which is the prayer that is likely to be accepted by Allah?"

"The prayer of a man for him who has done him some good."

"Which is the best form of charity?"

"Giving as much as one can, in spite of one's own need, to a man in misery without trying to make him feel grateful and without causing him pain by trying to put him off."

"Which is the best form of speech?"

"Speaking the truth plainly and unreservedly before the man who can harm you in some way or from whom you expect a favour."

"What kind of man is the wisest among the Muslims?"

"He whose actions are governed by obedience to Allah, and who invites others as well to it."

"What kind of man is the most stupid?"

"He who helps another man in committing some injustice, which comes to mean that he has been selling off his faith for serving the worldly interests of that man."

The Caliph agreed with all this, and then asked him pointedly, "What do you think of me?" Abū Hāzim wanted to be excused from replying to such a question, but the Caliph insisted that he should say a word of advice. Abū Hāzim said:

"O chief of the Muslims, your forefathers established their rule over the people with the help of the sword and against their will, after killing hundreds of men. Having done all this, they departed from the world. I wish you could know what they themselves are saying after their death and what people are saying about them."

Fearing that the Caliph would be displeased by such plain talk, one of his courtiers rebuked Abū Hāzim for having spoken so rudely. He replied: "No, you are wrong. I have not said anything rude but only what Allah has commanded us to say. For Allah has enjoined upon the *'ulamā'* to speak the truth before the people and not to conceal it." And he recited this verse of the Holy Qur'ān: لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهٗ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوْنَهٗ : "You shall make it clear to the people and not conceal it." (3:187)

The Caliph asked, "Alright how can we reform ourselves now?"

Abū Hāzim said, "Give up your pride, acquire a spirit of fellow-feeling for the people, and give them justly what is due to them."

"Abū Hāzim, is it possible that you come to live with us?"

"May Allah protect me from it!"

"Why?"

"Because I am afraid that if I live with you, I might begin to like your wealth and your grandeur, and have to suffer a grievous punishment for it in the other world."

"Well, is there anything you need? What can we do for you?"

"Yes, I have a need. Please help me to save myself from Hell and to enter Paradise."

"This is not in my power."

"Then, there is nothing you can do for me."

The Caliph asked him to pray for him. Abū Hāzim made this prayer: "O Allah, if you approve of Sulayman, make the well-being of this world and the next easily accessible to him; but if he is your enemy, drag him by the hair towards the deeds you approve of."

The Caliph then asked him for some special advice. Abū Hāzim said: "I shall make it short. You should have the fear of your Lord and reverence for Him to the degree that He never finds you present at the place He has forbidden, and never finds you absent from the place where He has commanded you to be."

Later on, the Caliph sent one hundred gold dinars to him as a present. Abū Hāzim sent the money back with a letter, saying: "If these dinars are the wages for my words, then blood and pork are, in my eyes, cleaner than this money. If you believe that this money is my due from the public exchequer, then there are hundreds of *'Ulamā'* and servants of Islam. If you have sent the same amount to each one of them, I can accept the money, otherwise I do not need it."

Abū Hāzim's refusal to accept the wages for giving advice clearly shows that taking wages for an act of worship or obedience to Allah is not permissible.

Verses 43-46

وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَارْكَعُوْا مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ O
اَتَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ تَتْلُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ
اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ O وَاسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيْرَةٌ
اِلَّا عَلَى الْخٰشِعِيْنَ O الَّذِيْنَ يَظُنُّوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ وَاَنَّهُمْ
اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ O

And be steadfast in *Salāh*, and pay *Zakāh*, and bow down with those who bow. Do you bid others to righteousness while you ignore your ownselves,

although you keep reciting the Book? Have you then no sense? And seek help through patience and prayer. And it is indeed exacting, but not for the humble in heart who bear in mind that they are to meet their Lord, and that to Him they are to return. (Verses 43 - 46)

In the last three verses and these four, Allah reminds the Israelites of the blessings He has bestowed upon them, and invites them to Islam and to good deeds. The earlier three verses were concerned with the true faith and doctrines; the present verses speak of good deeds, mentioning only the most important of them. It was usually the love of money and power that made it difficult for the Jews, specially for their scholars, to accept Islam. The verses prescribe the remedy for the twin diseases - they should fortify themselves with *Ṣabr* (patience) and *Salāh* (prayer).

"Patience" is a very weak translation of the Arabic word *Ṣabr*, which has three connotations: (a) bearing pain and misfortune patiently (b) restraining oneself from sin (c) being steadfast in obeying Allah.

Now, patience, in this wide sense, is the perfect remedy for the love of money. For, money cannot be an end in itself, but is sought only as a means of satisfying one's appetites; when a man has made a firm resolve not to follow his appetites like a slave, he will no longer need much money, nor will the love of money blind him to the distinction between his gain and loss. Similarly, *Salāh* is the remedy for ambition and the love of power. For, outwardly and inwardly both, *Salāh* involves the exercise of humility; naturally, the more one tries to perform it in the proper manner, the more it purifies him of the love of money and power, and of ambition and pride. These being the real substance of all spiritual disorder in man, once they are brought under control, it becomes easy for one to accept Islam and to be steadfast in one's faith.

Let us add that while patience (*Ṣabr*) requires only the restraining or giving up of excessive appetites and unnecessary desires, *Salāh*, in addition to all this, further requires the performance of certain actions, and also a temporary renunciation of perfectly lawful desires

and of many human needs which the Sharī'ah allows one to fulfil, e.g., eating, drinking, speaking, walking etc. - and, at that, making such a renunciation five times during the day and the night regularly at fixed hours. Thus, *Salāh* means performing certain prescribed actions and restraining oneself from all lawful or unlawful activities at fixed hours.

Once a man has decided to give up unnecessary desires, the instinctive urge itself loses its intensity in a few days. So, the exercise of patience is not, after all, so difficult. But offering *Salāh* entails submitting oneself to the conditions laid down by the Sharī'ah, observing the fixed hours, and giving up the basic human activities and desires, all of which is quite exacting for the instinctive disposition of man. So, one may very well raise an objection here: for the purpose of making it easy for a man to accept Islam and to be steadfast in his faith, the Holy Qur'ān prescribes *Ṣabr* and *Salāh*, but to use this remedy is in itself a difficult thing, specially the *Salāh* and its restriction - now, how can this difficulty be overcome? The Holy Qur'ān admits that performing *Salāh* regularly and steadfastly is, no doubt, exacting, and proceeds to show the way out of this impasse - *Salāh* is not a burden to the humble in heart.

To know the effectiveness of the remedy, we must know the disease, and find out why *Salāh* should be so burdensome. The human heart loves to roam about freely in the vast spaces of thought and fancy; all the organs of the human body being subservient to the heart, it requires them to be equally free. On the other hand, *Salāh* demands the renunciation of such freedom, - and prohibits eating, drinking, walking, talking etc. - a restriction which annoys the heart and is also painful for the human organs governed by it.

In short, *Salāh* is burdensome because the heart enjoys to keep the faculties of thought and imagination in a continuous motion. Motion being the disease, it can only be remedied by its opposite - restfulness. Hence, the Holy Qur'ān prescribes *Khushū'* (خشوع) a word which we have rendered into English by the phrase "humbleness in heart", but which actually signifies "the restfulness of the heart."

Now, the question arises as to how one can acquire this

"restfulness of the heart." Everyone knows through his own experience that, if one deliberately tries to empty one's heart of all kinds of thoughts and fancies, the effort rarely succeeds. The only way to achieve it is that since the human mind cannot move in two directions simultaneously, one should make it absorb itself in one thought alone so that all other thoughts may disappear by themselves without any effort on one's part. So, having prescribed "the restfulness of the heart", the Holy Qur'ān also prescribes a particular thought which will, if one absorbs oneself in it, drive away all other thoughts: once the movement of thought and fancy has been reduced to the restfulness of the heart, the performance of *Salāh* becomes easy; regularity in offering the ordained prayers gradually cures the disease of pride and ambition, and thus the way to the perfecting of one's faith grows smooth. Such is the well-ordered and beautifully integrated art of spiritual medicine that the Holy Qur'ān has given us! [21]

Now, the thought in which one should immerse oneself in order to acquire "the restfulness of the heart" has been explained by the Holy Qur'ān in describing "the humble in heart" - they are the people who bear in mind that they are to meet their Lord, when they shall receive the reward for their obedience, and also bear in mind that they are to return to Him, when they shall be required to present an account of their deeds. These twin thoughts produce hope and fear in the heart, and hope and fear are the best agents for inducing a man to devote himself to good deeds.

The prayer which the Holy Qur'ān prescribes is not a mere contemplation or meditation. *Al-Salāh*: الصلوة , in the terminology of Shari'ah, is a definite form of *'Ibadah* or worship, the mode of which is divinely ordained. As often as the Holy Qur'ān insists on the performance of the *Salāh*, it employs the word *Iqāmah*, except in one or two instances. Lexically, the word means "making a thing straight,

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21. As against this stand the fanciful systems of thought - concentration, wearing a pseudo-mystical look and some-times an Eastern make-up but all spawned in the Angst-ridden West - things like Yoga and Transcendental Meditation, which serve only to derange an already disordered psyche.

or keeping it firmly in its place." A tree or a wall or anything which is vertical and straight, usually lasts long in its place; so, the word also signifies "establishing a thing or making it perpetual." Thus, the conjunction of the two words, *Salāh* and *Iqāmah*, in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* signifies, not merely offering the prayer, but performing the five ordained prayers steadfastly in the prescribed form at the prescribed hours and fulfilling all the necessary conditions. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* speak of the great rewards and blessings one can hope to receive for offering *Salāh*, and of other benefits which flow from it, but all of them are tied up with *Iqāmah* in the sense which we have just explained. For example, the Holy Qur'ān says: إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ : "The *Salāh* restrains one from indecency and evil." (29:45) The prescribed prayer will bear these fruits only when one has been performing it in the full sense of *Iqāmah*. It follows from it that if one finds people who are quite regular in offering their prayers indulging in immodest or even evil activities, one should not have misgivings about the veracity of this verse, for these people have, no doubt, been praying, but not been observing the conditions of *Iqāmah*.

Verse 43 also speaks of paying *Zakāh*, the prescribed alms. Now, lexically speaking, the Arabic word زكوة : *Zakāh* has two significations: (a) to purify (b) grow. *Zakāh* is not a tax levied by the State or society, but, in the terminology of the Sharī'ah, means that portion of one's belongings which is set apart and spent in total accord with the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah*.

This verse is addressed to the Israelites, and does not by itself show that offering prayers and paying alms was obligatory for them before the days of Islam. But the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ۭ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ
اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ ۭ لَئِنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ

> Allah made a covenant with the Israelites and raised among them twelve chieftains. And Allah said, 'I am with you. Surely, if you perform *Salāh* and pay *Zakāh*'. (5:12)

does show that the two things were obligatory for them, even if the external modes might have been different.

The verse proceeds to say: "Bow down with those who bow (in worship)." Lexically, the Arabic word *Rukū'* means "to bow down", and may hence be applied even to prostrating oneself (*Sajdah*), which is the ultimate form of bowing down. But in the terminology of the Shari'ah it pertains to the particular form of bowing down which has been prescribed for *Salāh*.

One may well ask why this particular gesture has been chosen for a special mention from among the different gestures involved in the *Salāh*. We would reply that it is a metonymy for *Salāh*, and a part has been made to stand for the whole - just as in verse 17:78 : قُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ : "the recitation of the Qur'ān in the morning" refers to the morning prayers, and on several occasions in some *Hadith* narrations the use of the word *Sajdah* covers one set of movements (*Rak'āh)* in *Salāh* or even to the whole of it. Thus, the verse actually means: "Offer *Salāh* along with those who offer *Salāh*."

Salāh with Jamā'ah : (congregation)

Then, there is a more comprehensive explanation for the specific reference to "bowing down" (*Rukū'*). The form of the ritual prayers ordained for the Israelites and others included prostrating oneself (*Sajdah*), but not bowing down. This particular way of bowing down called *Rukū'* is peculiar to the Islamic *Salāh* alone. Hence, *Rakī'in* or those who bow down (in worship) are, obviously enough, the members of the Islamic *Ummah*, and the verse, in effect, asks the Israelites to accept Islam, and to offer their prayers along with the Muslims.

The command, اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ : "Be steadfast in *Salāh*", shows that *Salāh* is obligatory. The other command, وَارْكَعُوْا مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ : "Bow down with those who bow (in worship)", establishes that *Salah* is to be offered in the company of other Muslims (*Jamā'ah*).

A very important question arises here - what is the degree of the obligation intended in this injunction? There is a difference of views among the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) on this point. According to a large body of blessed Companions, their successors and of the jurists of the *ummah*, it is necessary (*wājib*) to offer *Salāh* in a congregation, and it is a sin to give up the *Jamā'ah*. Some of the blessed Companions have gone to the length of holding that it is not permissible to offer *Salāh* all by

oneself without a proper excuse allowed by the Sharī'ah. Verse 43, in its literal connotation, provides an argument in favour of this view. Moreover, certain *ḥadīth* narrations too seem to suggest that the *Jamā'ah* is necessary(*Wājib*). For example, a *ḥadīth* reported by Abu Dawud says that for a man living near a mosque *Salah* is permissible only in the mosque.

According to another *hadith* reported from the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہ by Imām Muslim, a Companion who was blind asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the permission to offer *Salāh* in his house, for there was no one to take him to the mosque and to bring him back. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم allowed him to do so, but, as he was leaving, asked him if he could hear the call for the prayers in his house. He said that he could. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم remarked: "In that case, you must come to the mosque." Another narration of the same *ḥadīth* as reported by Abū Dāwūd adds that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Then, I see no room for making a concession in your case." Similarly, al-Qurṭubī cites a *ḥadīth* from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ who reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said: من سمع النداء فلم يجب فلا صلوة له إلا من عذر : "The man who hears the call for the prayers but does not go to the mosque for the *Jamā'ah*, has not offered his prayers at all, except that he should have some valid excuse." On the basis of such *aḥādīth*, Companions like 'Abdullāh ibn Mās'ūd and Abū Musa al-Ash'arī رضی اللہ عنہم have ruled that if a man lives close enough to a mosque to hear the call for prayers and yet does not attend the *Jamā'ah* without a valid excuse, his offering of the *Salāh* at home is not acceptable. (Let us explain that hearing the call refers to the call made by a man possessing an average voice, and not to that made by a man with an extraordinarily loud voice or broadcast by a loudspeaker). Presented this far were arguments advanced by our revered elders who consider that *Salāh* with *Jamā'ah* is *wājib* or necessary.

On the other hand, the majority of the blessed Companions, their successors and later jurists hold that the *Jamā'ah* is a *Sunnah* which has been particularly emphasized (*Mu'akkadah*), and that among the *Sunnah* of this kind it is, like the *Sunnah* offered in *Fajr Salāh*, the most emphasized so as to come very close to being necessary. On the

basis of certain other verses and *Ḥadīth* narrations, they interpret the imperative in "bow down with those who bow" as intended for emphasis only. As for the *aḥadīth* which appear to be saying that it is just not permissible for those who live near a mosque to offer their *Salāh* at home, they say that these only mean that this is not the perfect way to offer the prayers.

The most comprehensive explanation of the matter has been provided by the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mās'ūd, as reported by Imām Muslim: "The man who wishes to meet Allah tomorrow (i.e. the Day of Judgment) as a true Muslim, should offer these (five) prayers regularly and steadfastly in a place where the call for the prayers is habitually made (i.e. a mosque), for Allah has laid down for your Prophet certain ways of good guidance (*Sunnan al-Hudā*), and offering the five prescribed prayers with the *Jamā'ah* is one of them. If you offer these prayers at home," he added pointing towards a man, "as he does, keeping away from the *Jamā'ah*, you will have forsaken the *Sunnah* of your Prophet, and if you forsake the *Sunnah* of your Prophet, you will go astray. The man who (performs the *wuḍū'* or ablution and cleanses himself in the proper manner, and then) goes to a mosque, for every step that he takes, Allah forgives one of his sins, adds one good deed to his account and promotes him one rank higher. Our company was such that there was not a single man, except for people known for their hypocrisy who would offer their prayers at home away from the *Jamā'ah*, so much so that even when a man was ill or unable to walk, he was brought to the mosque with his hands resting on the shoulders of two men, and made to stand in the row of those who were praying."

This statement fully brings out the great importance of the *Jama'āh*, but at the same time defines its exact position by including it among the "ways of good guidance" (*Sunan al-Hudā*) which are, in the terminology of the *Fuqahā'* (jurists), called *Al-Sunan al-Mu'akkadah* (the *Sunnah* on which the greatest emphasis has been placed). Thus, if a man does not go to the mosque for *Jamā'ah* and offers *Salāh* at home without having proper excuse like illness, his prayers will be valid, but he will have earned the displeasure of Allah for having given up a *Sunnah* which comes under the category of *Mu'akkadah*. If neglecting

the *Jamā'ah* becomes habitual for him, he will be committing a grave sin. If all the people living in the vicinity of a mosque leave it deserted and offer their prayers at home, they become, in the eyes of the *Sharī'ah*, liable to punishment. Qādi 'Iyad says that if persuasion fails to mend such people, they must be challenged by a show of force. (Qurṭubī)

An admonition to preachers without practice

Verse 44 addresses the religious scholars of the Jews, and reprimands them for a strange contradiction in their behaviour - they used to advise their friends and relatives to follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to be steadfast in their Islamic faith, which shows that they regarded Islam as the true faith, but, being enslaved to their desires, were not prepared to accept this faith themselves, although they were regular readers of the Torah and knew how emphatically it denounces the scholar who does not act upon his knowledge. Though externally addressed to the Jewish scholars, the verse, in a larger sense, condemns all those who preach good deeds to others but do not act upon this principle, who ask others to have fear of Allah but show no such fear in their own behaviour. The *Ḥadīth* speaks in detail of the dreadful punishments these men will have to bear in the other world. The blessed Companion Anas reports that on the Night of the Ascension (معراج), the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by some people whose lips and tongues were being cut with scissors made of fire; on being questioned as to who they were, the Archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام (Gabriel) explained that they were certain avaricious preachers of the Holy Prophet's عليهم السلام *Ummah* who bade others to good deeds but ignored themselves. (Ibn Kaṭhīr). According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Ibn 'Asākir, certain people living in Paradise will find some of their acquaintances in the fire of hell, and ask them, "How is it that you find yourselves in hell, while we have attained Paradise just on account of the good deeds we had learnt from you"; those in hell will reply: "We used to say all that with our tongues, but never acted upon what we said." (Ibn Kaṭhīr)

All this should not be taken to mean that it is not permissible for a man who has himself been slack in good deeds, or is in some way a transgressor, to give good counsel or preach to others, nor that a man who has been indulging in a certain sin may not try to dissuade others

from committing that sin. For, doing a good deed is one form of virtue, and persuading others to do this good deed is another form of virtue in its own right. Obviously, if one has given up one form of virtue it does not necessarily follow that he should give up the other form as-well. For example, if a man does not offer his prescribed *Salāh*, it is not necessary for him to give up fasting too. Similarly, if a man does not offer his prayers, it does not argue that he should not be allowed to ask others to offer their prayers. In the same way, doing something prohibited by the Sharī'ah is one kind of sin, and not to dissuade those whom he can influence from this misdeed is another kind, and committing one kind of sin does not necessarily entail committing the other sin as well. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Imam Malik has cited Sa'īd ibn Jubayr as saying that if everyone decides to refrain from persuading others to good deeds and dissuading them from evil deeds on the assumption that he himself is a sinner and can have no right to preach to others until and unless he has purged himself of all sins, there would be no one left to give good counsel to people, for who can be totally free of sins? According to Ḥasan of Basra, this is exactly what Satan wants that, obsessed by this false notion of purity, people should neglect their obligation to provide religious instruction and good counsel to others. (Qurṭubī)

Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī used to say that when he became aware of a certain bad habit in himself, he would expressly denounce this particular tendency in his sermons so that the *barakah* of the sermon should help him to get rid of it.

In short, verse 44 does not imply that the man who has been indifferent to good deeds in his own life is not allowed to preach or to give good counsel, but that the man who preaches should not neglect good deeds in his own life. Now, a new question arises here - it is not permissible for a preacher and non-preacher alike to neglect good deeds, then why should the preacher alone be specifically discussed in this context? We would reply that such negligence is, no doubt, impermissible for both, but the crime of the preacher is more serious and reprehensible than that of the non-preacher, for the former commits a crime knowing that it is crime, and cannot plead ignorance as an excuse. On the contrary, the non-preacher, specially if he is illiterate , may be

committing the sin of not trying to acquire knowledge, but, as far as the transgression of the Sharī'ah is concerned, he can, to a certain degree plead ignorance of the law as his excuse. Moreover, if a scholar or a preacher commits a sin, he is actually mocking at the Sharī'ah. The blessed Companion Anas رضى الله عنه reports from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that on the Day of Judgment, Allah will forgive illiterate and ignorant people much more readily than He will the scholars.

Khushū' : The Humbleness of Heart

Verse 45 speaks of the humble in heart. The "humbleness of heart" (*Khushū'*), which the Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadith* speak of, connotes a restfulness of heart and humility arising out of the awareness of Allah's majesty and of one's own insignificance in comparison to it. This quality, once acquired, shows its spiritual fruitfulness in making the obedience to Allah and submission to Him easy and pleasant for one; sometimes it reflects itself even in the bodily posture and appearance of the man who has acquired it, for such a man always behaves in a disciplined and polite manner, is modest and humble, and seems to be "broken-hearted", that is to say, one who has lost all vanity and self-love. If a man does not bear genuine humility and fear of Allah in his heart, he does not, with all his external modesty and downcast looks, really possess the quality of *Khushū'* (humbleness of heart). In fact, it is not proper even to show the signs of *Khushū'* in one's behavior deliberately. On seeing a young man sitting with his head bowed down, the rightly-guided *Khalīfah* Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said: "Raise your head! Humbleness of heart is in the heart." Ibrāhīm Nakha'i has said: "Humbleness of heart does not mean wearing rough clothes, eating coarse food and keeping the head bowed down. Humbleness of heart is to treat the high and the low alike in matters of truth, and to keep the heart free to devote itself entirely to Allah and to the performance of what Allah has made obligatory for you." Similarly, Ḥasan of Basra has said : "The Caliph 'Umar would speak loudly enough to be heard, whenever he spoke, would walk swiftly, whenever he walked, and would strike forcefully, whenever he struck a man. All the same, he undoubtedly was a man with a real humbleness of heart." In short, wearing deliberately and by one's own choice, the looks of a man who possesses the humbleness of heart is a

kind of self-delusion and a ruse of Satan, and hence reprehensible. But if a man happens to manifest such signs without knowing it, he can be excused. (Qurtubi)

Let us add that there is another word - *Khudū'* - which is often used along with *Khushū'*, and which appears several times in the Holy Qur'ān as well. The two words are almost synonymous. But the word *Khushū'*, according to its lexical root, refers to the lowering of the voice and of the glance when it is not artificial but arises out of a real modesty and fear of Allah - for example, the Holy Qur'ān says: "Voices have been hushed" (20:108). On the other hand, the word "*Khudū'*" refers to the bodily posture which shows modesty and humility - for example, the Holy Qur'ān says: "So their necks will stay humbled to it." (26:4) We must also define as to what, in the eyes of the Sharī'ah, the exact position and value of *Khushū'* is with regard to *Salāh*. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* repeatedly stress its importance as in: "And perform the prayer for the sake of My remembrance." (20:14)

Obviously, forgetfulness is the opposite of remembrance, and hence the man who becomes unmindful of Allah while offering *Salah*, is not fulfilling the obligation of remembering Allah. Another verse says: "Do not be among the unmindful." (7:205)

Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "The *Salāh* simply means self-abasement and humility." Says another *ḥadīth*: "If his prayers do not restrain a man from immodesty and evil, he goes farther and farther away from Allah." *Salāh* offered unmindfully does not obviously restrain man from evil deeds, and consequently such a man goes farther and farther away from Allah.

Having quoted these verses and *ahadith* in support of other arguments in his *Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm*, Imām al-Ghazālī suggests that *Khushū'* must then be a necessary condition for *Salāh*, and that its acceptability must depend on it. He adds that, according to the blessed Companion, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal and jurists as great as Sufyān al-Thawri and Ḥasan al-Basrī, *Salāh* offered without *Khushū'* is not valid.

On the other hand, the four great Imāms of Islamic jurisprudence and most of the jurists do not hold *Khushū'* to be a necessary condition

for *Salāh*. In spite of considering it to be the very essence of *Salāh*, they say that the only condition necessary in this respect is that while saying *Allahu Akbar* at the beginning of the prayers one should turn with all one's heart to Allah, and have the intention (*niyyah*) of offering the prayers only for the sake of Allah; if one does not attain *Khushū'* in the rest of the prayers, one will not get any reward for that part of the prayers, but, from the point of view of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), one will not be charged with having forsaken *Salāh*, nor will one be liable to the punishment which is meted out to those who give up prescribed prayers without a valid excuse.

Imām al-Ghazālī has provided an explanation for this divergence of view. The *Fuqahā'* (jurists), he points out, are not concerned with inner qualities and states of the heart (*Aḥwāl*), but only enunciate the exoteric regulations of the Sharī'ah on the basis of the external actions of men's physical organs - it does not lie within the jurisdiction of *Fiqh* to decide whether one will get a reward for a certain deed in the other world or not. *Khushū'* being an inner state, they have not prescribed it as a necessary condition for the total duration of *Salāh*, but have made the validity of the prayers depend on the lowest degree of *Khushū'* - turning, as one begins the prayers, with one's heart to Allah and having the intention of only worshipping Him.

There is another explanation for not making *Khushū'* a necessary condition for the total duration of the prayers. In certain other verses, the Holy Qur'ān has clearly enunciated the principle which governs legislation in religious matters: nothing is made obligatory for men that should be beyond their endurance and power. Now, except for a few gifted individuals, men in general are incapable of maintaining *Khushū'* for the total duration of the prayers; so, in order to avoid compelling men to a task they cannot accomplish, the *Fuqahā'* have made *Khushū'* a necessary condition only for the beginning of the prayers, and not for the whole duration.

In concluding the discussion, Imām al-Ghazālī remarks that in spite of the great importance of *Khushū'* one can depend on the infinite mercy of Allah, and hope that the man who offers his prayers unmindful will not be counted among those who give up the prayers altogether, for he has tried to fulfil the obligation, has turned his heart

away from everything to concentrate his attention on Allah even for a few moments, and has been mindful of Allah alone at least while forming his intention for the prayers. Offering one's prayers in this half-hearted manner has, to say the least, the merit of keeping one's name excluded from the list of those who habitually disobey Allah and forsake the prescribed prayers altogether.

In short, this is a matter in which hope and fear both are involved - there is the fear of having incurred punishment as well as the hope of being ultimately forgiven. So, one should try one's best to get rid of one's laziness and indifference. But it is the mercy of Allah alone which can help one to succeed in this effort.

Verses 47-48

يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاَنِّيْ
فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ○ وَاتَّقُوْا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِيْ نَفْسٌ عَنْ
نَّفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ
وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ○

O Children of Isrā'īl (the Israelites), remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and that I gave you excellence over the worlds. And guard yourselves against a day when no one shall stand for anyone for anything, nor shall intercession be accepted on one's behalf, nor shall ransom be taken from one and neither shall they be given support. (Verses 47-48)

Verse 47 asks the Israelites to call to their minds the blessing of Allah, so that the recognition of the benefits they have received may induce them to be thankful to Allah and thus to obey Him. The verse is addressed to the Jews contemporaneous with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while the blessing had been received by their forefathers. The point is that when a man receives a special favour, his children and grand children too usually partake of the benefits flowing from it; in this sense, the Jews who are being addressed may be said to have received the blessing themselves.

As for Allah giving preference to the Israelites "over the worlds", the phrase means that they were given preference only in certain matters, or only over a large part of men - for example, over the contemporaries of the earlier Israelites.

The day referred to in verse 48 is the Day of Judgment. As for no one being able to suffice another on that day, the phrase should be understood in the sense of one man paying the dues on behalf of another man. Let us, for example, suppose that a man is found wanting in the performance of obligatory acts of worship like *Salāh* and *Sawm* (fasting), and another man should suggest that his own prayers and fasts may be transferred to the account of the former in order to make up the deficiency. Such a transaction shall not be possible on that day. Ransom, of course, means the money paid for securing the release of a criminal - this too shall be out of the question. As for intercession (*shafā'ah*) not being accepted, the phrase does not totally deny the possibility of intercession on the Day of Judgment; it only means that if a man does not have *'Īmān* (faith), no intercession in his favour shall be accepted. For the Holy Qur'ān makes it clear in certain other verses that Allah will allow intercession to be made on behalf of some people (53:26, 34:23, 2:55 etc.), and will disallow it in the case of those who do not possess *'Īmān* (21:28, 20:109). Since there would be no intercession on behalf of the latter, the question of its being accepted does not simply arise. 'Receiving support', in usual terms, means getting oneself released from a difficult situation with the help of a strong and powerful friend or patron. In short, none of the ways of receiving help possible in this world will be effective in the other world unless one possesses *'Īmān*.

A doctrinal point

On the basis of verse 48, the *Mu'tazilah* and some other groups of a more recent origin have denied the possibility of all intercession in favour of Muslims. But, as we have shown above, the negation of intercession applies only to disbelievers and infidels. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 49

وَاِذْ نَجَّيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُوْنَ

اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَ يَسْتَحْيُوْنَ نِسَآءَكُمْ ؕ وَفِىْ ذٰلِكُمْ بَلَآءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيْمٌ ۝

And when We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh! They had been inflicting on you grievous torment, slaughtering your sons and leaving your women alive. And in all that there was a great trial from your Lord. (Verse 49)

Verse 47 had spoken of the special favours shown to the Israelites by Allah. Now, with Verse 49 begins the account of these favours.

Someone had made a prediction to the Pharaoh (فرعون) that a child was going to be born among the Israelites who would destroy his kingship. So, he began slaughtering all the male infants as soon as they were born. But he would spare the females, as there was nothing to fear from them, and, moreover, they could, on growing up, serve as maid-servants. So, even this leniency was motivated by self-interest. What the verse refers to as "a great trial" is either the slaughter of the sons - which was a calamity, and it is the quality of patience that is tested in a calamity - or the deliverance from the people of the Pharaoh - which was a blessing, and it is the quality of thankfulness which is tested when one receives a blessing.

The next verse gives us the details about this deliverance.

Verses 50 - 51

وَاِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَاَنْجَيْنٰكُمْ وَاَغْرَقْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَاَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذْ وٰعَدْنَا مُوْسٰىٓ اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَنْتُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ۝

And when We parted the sea for you; then We rescued you, and drowned the Pharaoh's people as you were looking on! And when We appointed forty nights for Mūsā, then you took to yourselves the calf thereafter, and you were unjust! (Verses 50-51)

Verse 50 refers to certain things which had happened in the days of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Moses). He, in his capacity as a messenger of Allah, continued efforts for a long time to make the Pharaoh and his

people see Truth, but when they persisted in their denial, Allah commanded him to take the Israelites along with him and leave Egypt surreptitiously. On their way, they came across a sea while the Pharaoh was behind him with his army in hot pursuit. Allah commanded the sea to split, and make way for Sayyidnā Mūsā and his people. So, they went over smoothly. But when the Pharaoh and his army followed them into the sea, it gathered the water back so that the Pharaoh and his men were drowned then and there.

Verse 51 refers to other incidents in the same story. When the Pharaoh had been drowned, the Israelites, according to one report, went back to Egypt, or, according to another, began to live somewhere else. Having at last found a peaceful existence, they now wished they could receive a *Sharī'ah*, or a religious code of laws, from Allah which they should follow. Allah answered the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , and promised that if he came to the Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and devoted himself to worship for a month, he would receive a Divine Book. He gladly obeyed the Commandment, and was granted the Torah. But he was ordered to continue to worship for ten days more, because he had broken his fast after a month and thus lost the special odour which rises from the mouth of a fasting person and which is very pleasant to Allah; so Allah commanded him to fast for ten additional days and regain that odour. Thus, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام completed forty days of total fasting and devotion. While he was on Mt. Sinai, something very odious happened to the Israelites. Among them there was a man called Samiriyy. He fashioned the figure of a calf out of gold or silver, and put into it some of the dust which he had picked up from under the hooves of the horse of Jibrā'il (the Archangel Gabriel عليه السلام), at the time when the Pharaoh and his army had been drowned by the Archangel. The golden calf immediately acquired life. The ignorant among the Israelites were so impressed that they started worshipping it.

Verse 51 calls them "unjust" for having committed this sin, for 'injustice' lies in putting things in the improper places, and idolatory is essentially just that.

A doctrinal point

Verse 50 speaks of the splitting of the sea, and clearly proves that

miracles do occur at the hands of prophets, which some Westernized Muslims have been trying to deny. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 52

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ٥

Then We pardoned you, even after that, so that you be grateful. (Verse 52)

The Israelites were forgiven only when they had offered *Taubah* (repentance), as recounted in Verse 54. In saying that they were pardoned so that they might learn gratefulness, the present verse employs the Arabic word لعل : *La'lla* which indicates expectation. In the present context it does not mean that Allah had or could have any doubt or misgiving about this or any other matter; what the word implies here is just that when a man receives a pardon, the onlookers may expect him to feel grateful.

Verse 53

وَاِذْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ٥

Then We gave Musa the Book and the Criterion (of right and wrong) so that you find the right path. (Verse 53)

Torah is the book which was given to Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام .

In the language of the Holy Qur'ān, *al-Furqān* is a term signifying something which separates truth from falsehood or distinguishes the one from the other. In the present verse, it refers either to (a) the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* which are to be found in the Torah, for the *Sharī'ah* resolves all the differences that may arise with regard to the doctrines or the practice of good deeds; or to (b) miracles which decide between a true or a false claim in a palpable manner; or even to (c) the Torah itself which has the twin qualities of being a Book of Allah and of being an instrument for separating truth from falsehood.

Verse 54

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ
الْعِجْلَ فَتُوْبُوْٓا اِلٰى بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

عِنْدَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

And when Musa said to his people: "My people, you have wronged yourselves by your taking the calf (as God). So, turn in repentance to your Creator and slay yourselves. That will be better for you in the sight of your Creator" Then, He accepted your repentance Indeed He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful. (Verse 54)

This verse describes the special mode of offering their *Taubah* (repentance) which was prescribed for the Israelites in this situation, -- that is to say, those who had not indulged in the worship of the golden calf should execute those who had. Similarly, in the Islamic *Sharī'ah* too, certain major sins necessarily entail capital punishment even when the sinner has offered this *Taubah* -- for example, life in return for a life in the case of intentional homicide, or death by stoning in the case of adultery established through proper evidence.

Then the Israelites acted upon this divine commandments, they became worthy of receiving the mercy and favour of Allah in the other world.

Verse 55

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوسٰى لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰى نَرَى اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً
فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ۝

And when you said, "Musa, we will never believe you till we see Allah openly!" So, the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on. (Verse 55)

Then Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) brought the Torah from Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and presented it to the Israelites as the book of Allah, some of them were insolent enough to say that they could not believe it until and unless Allah Himself told them in so many words. With the permission of Allah, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام replied that even this condition would be fulfilled, if they went with him to Mount *Tūr*. The Israelites chose seventy men for this purpose. Arriving there, they heard the words of Allah with their own ears. Now, in their perversity, they invented a new ruse. It was not enough, they said, to hear the speech, for they could not be sure whether it was

Allah Himself who had spoken to them or someone else. But they promised that they would be finally convinced if they could see Allah with their own eyes. Since it is beyond the power of a living being to be able to see Allah in the physical world, they had to pay for their impertinence, and were killed by a thunderbolt -- the next verse reports their death.

Verse 56

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 0

Then, We raised you up after your death, so that you be grateful. (Verse 56)

This verse refers to death, which suggests that the thunderbolt had killed them. Since the Israelites had always been mistrusting Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام , he feared that they would suspect him of having taken the men to a solitary place and got them slaughtered. So, he prayed to Allah to save him from such a vile accusation. Allah granted his prayer, and gave those a new life.

Verse 57

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ 0

And We made the cloud give you shade, and sent down to you *Mann* and *Salwā*: 'Eat of the good things We have provided you'. And they (by their ingratitude) did Us no harm, but were harming only themselves. (Verse 57)

These two incidents took place in the wilderness of *Tīh*. The Israelites belonged to Syria, but had gone to Egypt in the time of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph علیہ السلام), and settled there, while Syria itself had come under the domination of a people called the *'Amāliqah* (Amaleks). When the Pharaoh had been drowned and the Israelites could live in peace, Allah commanded them to go to war against the *'Amāliqah*, and to free their homeland. The Israelites started on the expedition, but, on approaching Syria, when they came to learn about the military strength of the foe, their courage failed them, and they

refused to engage themselves in the *Jihād*. Allah punished them for their disobedience, so that for full forty years they kept wandering about in a wilderness, and could not even go back to Egypt. The wilderness was not very vast, but only a stretch of some ten miles, lying between Egypt and Syria. They would make a day-long march in the direction of Egypt, and stop somewhere for the night. But, on getting up the next morning, they would always find themselves just where they had started from. Thus, they spent forty years wandering about in the wilderness in futile rage and exasperation. That is why the wilderness is called *Tīh*, which signifies 'having lost one's way'.

The wilderness was just a barren space without a tree or a building which could offer protection against heat or cold. There was no food to eat, and no clothes to wear. But in answer to the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , Allah made a miraculous provision for all their needs. When they could not bear the scorching sun, Allah sent them the shade of a thin, white cloud. When they began to starve, Allah blessed them with *Mann* (manna) and *Salwā*. That is to say, Allah produced honeydew in abundance which they could easily gather. Hence it has been designated as *mann* which signifies "a gift or favour". Then, quails would not flee but come around them, so that they could catch the birds with little effort. The two things being unusual, the Holy Qur'ān says that Allah made them "descend" for the benefit of the Israelites. Similarly, when they were thirsty, Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to strike a rock with his staff, which made twelve streams gush forth, as the Holy Qur'ān narrates in another place. When they complained of the thick darkness of the night, Allah produced for them a constant pillar of light. When their clothes began to wear out, Allah showed another miracle - their clothes would neither go dirty nor wear out, while the clothes of the children grew with their growth. (Qurṭubī)

Allah had commanded the Israelites to take as much of the miraculous food as they really needed, and not to store it for future use. But when they disobeyed this commandment, the meat began to rot. This is how they harmed, not Allah, but themselves.

Verse 58

وَاِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوْا هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَّادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّقُوْلُوْا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْلَكُمْ خَطٰيٰكُمْ ؕ وَسَنَزِيْدُ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝

And when We said, "Enter this town, and eat there to your heart's content wherever you will. And enter the gate prostrating and say: *Ḥiṭṭah* (we seek forgiveness) - so that We forgive your errors. And We shall give much more to those who are good in deeds." (Verse 58)

There are two views as to when this incident took place. According to Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir, when the Israelites grew weary of eating the same *Mann* and *Salwā* everyday and prayed for being granted the kind of food they were used to (2:61), they were commanded to go to a certain city where they could get what they wished for. So, the commandment in the present verse pertains to the mode of entering this city, and lays down the spiritual etiquette for action and speech on this occasion. On the other hand is the view that the commandment pertains to the city against which the Israelites had been ordered to engage themselves in a *Jihād*. They obeyed it only after their long wanderings in the wilderness, and conquered the city. The commandment reported in Verse 58 was sent to them through Sayyidnā Yūsha' (Joshua عليه السلام) who was the prophet among them at the time.

The discrepancy between the two views, which raises a question about the chronological sequence of the events, should not confuse us as to the nature of the stories narrated in the Holy Qur'ān. The Holy Qur'ān does not tell the stories for the sake of telling stories, the usual purpose of which is to provide entertainment. The real intention here is to draw certain conclusions from the stories, and to illustrate or point out certain spiritual principles. Now, the various episodes of a story help to bring out various principles. So, in view of a particular effect sought in a particular context, the chronological sequence of the episodes may be invented and the incidents re-arranged to serve the interest of the pattern of meaning that is intended. This is just what the Holy Qur'ān does; in fact, this is a quite usual literary method, and

the disturbance of the chronological order in the stories narrated by the Holy Qur'an should not raise irrelevant questions in the mind of the reader - after all, in any and every piece of writing, or even speech, it is the intention which governs the ordering of the material.

The Verse holds out the promise that if the Israelites obeyed the commandment, their errors would be forgiven. On the basis of the first of the two views we have referred to, one must include among the errors their rejection of the *Mann* and the *Salwa* and their request for the normal kind of food. The demand was really insolent, but Allah promised that if they showed their obedience by following the new commandment, He would forgive this error too. Anyhow, the promise of pardon was general, and extended to everyone who was ready to obey the new commandment, while a special reward was promised to those who devoted themselves to good deeds sincerely and wholeheartedly.

The meaning of *Ihsan*

"We may add that 'sincerity' and 'wholeheartedness' are a very weak rendering in English of the essential quality of the text's *Muhsinun* (rendered here as "those who are good in deeds"). This word comes from *Ihsan* which signifies "doing a thing beautifully - that is, in the manner that is proper to it." Beside this lexical meaning, *Ihsan* has a technical meaning which has been defined in a famous *Hadith*: أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه، فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك : "Offer your prayers as if you can see Him, and if you do not see Him, He is seeing you (in any case)." (Bayan al-Qur'an)

Verse 59

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ فَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ○

But those who were unjust substituted another word for the one that was set for them. So, We sent down upon those who were unjust a scourge from heaven, because they have been acting sinfully. (Verse 59)

This verse is a continuation of the preceding verse. Allah had

commanded the Israelites to keep, while entering the city, repeating the word *Ḥiṭṭatun* (which indicates repentance for one's sin and the request for pardon). But they replaced this word with another phrase by way of mockery, and started saying, *Ḥabbatun fī sha'īrah* (grain in the midst of barley), or *Ḥinṭatun* (wheat).

The punishment which descended on them was plague that wiped out seventy thousand men (Qurṭubī). In passing, we may recall a *hadith* which says that plague is a punishment for the disobedient, and a blessing for the obedient.

Injunctions and related considerations

The Israelites were punished for having changed a word ordained by Allah, and substituted a phrase of their own invention, thus distorting the meaning itself. According to the consensus of the *Fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists), a change in the words of the Holy Qur'ān, or of a *Ḥadīth*, or of a divine commandment which invents or distorts the actual meaning is impermissible.

This should be obvious enough. But there is another question -- is it permissible to change the words in such a way that the meaning does not suffer but remains intact? In his commentary, Imam al-Qurṭubī says that in certain texts and in certain kinds of speech the words are as much a part of the intention as the meanings and equally necessary for conveying an idea, and that in such a case it is not permissible to change the words. For example, in the *Adhān* (the call for prayers) it is not permissible to employ words other than those which have been laid down for the purpose by the *ḥadīth*. Similar is the case of the *Salāh*: the different things to be recited in them (like *Subḥanaka Allāhumma, At-Taḥiyyāt, Qunūt*) or the glorification of Allah during the *Rukū'* (bowing down) and the *Sajdah* (prostration) -- all these must be said exactly in the words which have been reported in the *ḥadīth*; substituting other words is not allowed, even if the meaning does not undergo a change.

This rule applies to each and every word of the Holy Qur'ān. All the Injunctions with regard to the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān strictly pertain to those words alone which Allah has revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to the *ḥadīth*, the merit of reciting the

Holy Qur'ān is so great that for every letter that one reads or recites one gets the reward which one would get for performing ten good deeds. But if one reads a very accurate translation of the Holy Qur'ān or even an Arabic version in which the original words have been replaced by certain other words without injuring the sense, the *Sharī'ah* shall not accept it as a recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, and one will not get any reward of recitation for it. For, it is not the meanings alone which constitute the Holy Qur'ān; "Qur'ān" is the name of meanings inherent in the words revealed by Allah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ so that the two are inseparable from each other.

It appears from the present verse that Allah had commanded the Israelites to say this particular word, *Ḥiṭṭatun*, while offering their *Taubah* (repentance), and hence changing the ordained word was in itself a sin. They went so far as to distort even the meaning, and drew upon themselves the divine punishment.

Now, as for other kinds of speech in which it is the meanings that are really intended and not the words, the masters of the science of *Ḥadīth* and the jurists in general believe that in such places words can be changed provided that the meaning does not suffer but remains intact. Al-Qurṭubī has cited Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik and Imām Shafi'i; as holding the view that it is quite permissible to report a *ḥadīth* with regard to its meaning alone provided that the man who reports it should have a perfect knowledge of the Arabic language and also be familiar with the situation to which this particular *ḥadīth* pertains, so that he should not misinterpret the text or distort the sense.

On the other hand, certain masters of the science of *Ḥadīth* do not allow the slightest change in the words of a *ḥadīth*, and insist that it should be reported exactly in the words in which one has received it. This, for example, is the view of Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Qāsim ibn Muḥammad etc. Some of them even insist that if in reporting a *ḥadīth* a reporter has made a lexical mistake, the man who has heard the *ḥadīth* from him must, in his own turn, report it in exactly the same words including the mistake, only indicating what the correct word is likely to be. Such scholars cite a *ḥadīth* in support of their view. It has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised a man to say this

prayer before going to sleep at night: اٰمَنْتُ بِكِتَابِكَ الَّذِیْ اَنْزَلْتَ وَنَبِیِّكَ الَّذِیْ اَرْسَلْتَ : "I have faith in Your Book which You have made to descend, and in Your Prophet whom You have sent." The prescribed prayer had the word *Nabiyy* (Prophet), but the man changed it for *Rasūl* (Messenger). The Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed him not to make a change, but to say the prescribed word *Nabiyy*. This shows that it is not permissible to change a single word in reporting a *ḥadith*. Similarly, another *ḥadith* says: نَضَّرَاللّٰهُ اِمْرَأً سَمِعَ مَقَالَتِیْ فَبَلَّغَهَا كَمَا سَمِعَهَا : "May Allah make the man flourish who heard my speech, and then conveyed it exactly as he had heard." This also indicates that it is necessary to report the exact words of a *hadith* as one has received them.

Most of the jurists and the masters of the science of *Ḥadīth*, however, believe that although it is better to report a *hadīth* as far as possible in exactly the same words as one has heard without making any change intentionally, yet if one cannot recall the exact words, it is also permissible to report the meaning in one's own words, and that the words of the *ḥadīth* quoted above - "... conveyed it exactly as he had heard" - might also mean that one should report the meaning of a *ḥadīth* exactly and without any alteration. Obviously, changing the words does not necessarily go against this provision. Imām al-Qurṭubī has, in support of his view, pointed out that this very *ḥadith* goes to prove that changing words, when necessary, is permissible, for this *hadīth* itself has come down to us in different words in different versions. As for the other *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has insisted that the word *Nabiyy* should be recited and not the word *Rasūl*, one might explain it in this way. The word *Nabiyy* (prophet) carries the sense of sublimity much more than does the word *Rasūl*, for the latter is employed for any messenger whatsoever, while the former is reserved only for those who are specially chosen by Allah for being directly addressed through revelation (*Waḥy*), and who thus occupy a rank higher than all other men. There is another explanation too. As far as prayers are concerned, the words appointed for the purpose by Allah or by the Holy Prophet ﷺ have a much greater efficacy than any other words can have. (Qurṭubī) That is why those who prepare تعویذ : *ta'wīdh* (translated as 'charms' in absence of an exact counterpart) or *'awdhah*, or suggest words to pray are very careful in

keeping to the authentically reported words without the slightest change. So, one may say that the prayers which are considered to be very efficacious, should be included in the first category of speech in which not only the meanings but the words also must be carefully safeguarded, for both are equally intended.

Verse 60

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۖ فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۖ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۝

And when Musa sought water for his people! We said, "Strike the rock with your staff." So, gushed forth twelve springs from it. Each group of people came to know their drinking place. "Eat and drink of what Allah has provided, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder." (Verse 60)

This incident too belongs to the story of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. Parched with thirst, they requested Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to pray to Allah for water. Allah commanded him to strike a certain rock with his staff. As he did so, twelve streams gushed forth out of the rock, one for each of the twelve tribes. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) عليه السلام had twelve sons, and each had a large family of his own. So, the families were considered as tribes, each with its own administrative organisation and its own head. Hence, the number twelve. What they have been asked to eat is the *Mann* and the *Salwā* (manna and quails), and the water is, of course, the one which had come out of the rock.

The Israelites have, in this verse, been asked not to spread disorder which in this context signifies disobedience to Allah and transgression of His Commandments.

The great Commentator al-Qaḍī al-Bayḍāwi points out that it is a great error [22] to deny miracles. When Allah has given a certain stone the unusual property of drawing iron to itself, it cannot be, logically

22. Even a great error in logic.

and rationally speaking, impossible that He should also give another stone the property of absorbing water from the earth and of releasing it again. Even this explanation is meant for those who take a superficial view of things. Otherwise, it is in no way impossible that Allah should produce water within a stone itself. Those who call it impossible do not actually understand the technical meaning of the term "impossible."

An answer to a doubt about the Israelites

It has been asked whether it is necessary, in times of drought, to offer formal prayers in order to beseech Allah for rains. The present verse tells us that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام just prayed for water, and Allah made a miraculous provision. It shows that the essential thing in beseeching Allah for rains is just a prayer. In the *Shari'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, a mere prayer was considered to be sufficient for the purpose. According to Imām Abū Hanīfah, this principle holds good for the Islamic *Sharī'ah* too. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has, in this respect, acted differently on different occasions. An authentic *ḥadith* reports that once he went outside the city to the open space where the congregational prayers were held on the day of the *'Īd*, offered formal prayers, delivered a *Khuṭbah* (address), and then prayed to Allah for rains. According to another *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the blessed Companion Anas, once the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for rains while delivering the *Khuṭbah* on Friday, and Allah sent down rains.

No matter what form the prayer takes, all the scholars agree that it cannot be effective unless it is accompanied by a repentance for one's sins, a confession of one's powerlessness, a sincere expression of humility and an affirmation of servitude to Allah. So long as one persists in sin and transgression, one has no right to hope that the prayer would be answered. But if Allah may, in His mercy and benevolence, grant the prayer without this condition being fulfilled, it is His will, and He is All-Powerful.

Verse 61

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوسٰى لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلٰى طَعَامٍ وَّاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ

يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْۢبِتُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْۢ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُوْمِهَا
وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا ؕ قَالَ اَتَسْتَبْدِلُوْنَ الَّذِیْ هُوَ اَدْنٰی بِالَّذِیْ
هُوَ خَیْرٌ ؕ اِهْبِطُوْا مِصْرًا فَاِنَّ لَکُمْ مَّا سَاَلْتُمْ ؕ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَیْهِمُ
الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْکَنَةُ ۚ وَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ کَانُوْا
یَکْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَیَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّبِیّٖنَ بِغَیْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا
وَّکَانُوْا یَعْتَدُوْنَ ○

And when you said, "Mūsā we will no longer stay on a single food: So, pray for us to your Lord that He may bring forth for us of what the earth produces -- its wheat, its lentils and its onions." He said, "Do you want to take the inferior in exchange of what is better? Go down to a town, and you will have what you have asked for." And disgrace and misery were stamped over them and they returned with wrath from Allah. That was because they used to deny the signs of Allah, and would slay the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and would go beyond the limits. (Verse 61)

This episode has been indirectly referred to in verse 58, and it also occurred in the wilderness of *Tīh*. The Israelites grew weary of eating the *Mann* and the *Salwā* (manna and quails) everyday, and wished to have ordinary vegetables and grain. Allah commanded them through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to go to a certain town which lay somewhere in the wilderness, to till the land there, to grow to eat whatever they liked.

The Israelites were thus being ungrateful and impertinent. Even otherwise, it was so usual with them not only to transgress divine commandments but also to deny them outright. They had also been slaying a number of prophets at different times - they knew they were committing a misdeed, but their hostility to the truth and their stubbornness in disobedience made them blind to the nature of their conduct and its consequences. Through such persistent and wilful misdemeanour they drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah. Disgrace and degradation settled upon them for ever. That is to say,

they no longer had any respect in the eyes of others, nor magnanimity in themselves.

One form of this disgrace is that temporal power has been taken away from them for ever. For only forty days, however, - and that too when the Day of Judgment will have come close - the *Dajjāl* (Anti-Christ) belonging to the Jewish race, will have an irregular dominion like that of a robber. This cannot be described as having temporal power, in the proper sense of the term. Allah had made it quite clear to the Jews through Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) that if they continued to be disobedient, they would always have to live under the domination of other nations. Says the Holy Qur'ān: وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَن يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ : "And when your Lord proclaimed He would send forth against them, unto the Day of Resurrection, those who should visit them with evil chastisement." (7:167)

As to how the Companions, their successors and the great commentators have interpreted the disgrace and degradation which has settled on the Jews, let us present a summary in the words of Ibn Kathīr: لايزالون مستذلين من وجدهم استذلهم وضرب عليهم الصغار : "No matter how wealthy they grow, they will always be despised by other people; whoever gets hold of them will humiliate them, and attach to them the emblems of servitude." The commentator Dahhāk Ibn Muzāhim reports from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās that the Jews will always remain under the domination of others, will be paying taxes and tributes to them - that is to say, they will themselves never have power and authority in the real sense of the term.

Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān also speaks of the disgrace of the Jews, but with some addition:

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ

And disgrace has been stamped over them wherever they are found, unless (saved) through a rope from Allah and through a rope from men." (3:112)

Now, the 'rope' or means from Allah refers to the case of those whom Allah Himself has, through His own commandment, saved from this disgrace - for example, children, women, or those who are totally devoted to prayer and worship and never go to war against Muslims.

The 'rope' or means from men refers to a treaty of peace with the Muslims, or a permission to live in a Muslim country on payment of the *Jizyah* (the tax levied on non-Muslims living in a Muslim country, which exonerates them from military service etc.) Since the Holy Qur'ān uses the expression "from men" and not "from Muslims", a third situation is also possible - the Jews may make political arrangements with other non-Muslims, live under their backing and protection, and thus be in 'peace'.

There is another aspect to the question - we must look into the nature of the exception that has been made in the verse which we have just cited. Now, when an exception is added to a statement, the exception may fall into either of these two categories: (1) What has been excepted formed, or still forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example, take this statement: "The tribe came except Zayd." Zayd was and still is a member of the tribe, but he has been excepted from it in so far as the act of coming is concerned. (2) What has been excepted did not form, or no longer forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example: "The tribe came except the donkey." The donkey, of course, never formed a part of the tribe, and he has been excepted from the act of coming in so far as the act pertains to the tribe. If the exception made in the present verse is of the first kind, then the statement would mean that all the Jews always and everywhere live in disgrace with the exception of two situations - protection provided to women and children etc. by the commandment of Allah Himself, or by a treaty of peace with the Muslims or with some non-Muslim nations. On the other hand, if the exception is of the second kind, the verse would mean that the Jews as a group would essentially and always remain in disgrace with the exception of some who may find protection under the commandment of Allah, or of some others who may receive support from other nations and thus disguise their own disgrace.

Thus, Verse 3:112 helps to elucidate Verse 2:61, and also dispels the doubt which sometimes arises in the minds of the Muslims at the sight of the so-called "Israeli state" imposed on Palestine. For, they find it difficult to reconcile the two things - the Holy Qur'ān seems to indicate that the Jews will never have a sovereign state, while they

have actually usurped Palestine and set up a state of their own. But if we go beyond the appearances, we can easily see that "Israel" is not an independent sovereign state, but only a stronghold of the Western powers which they have established in the midst of Muslim countries in order to protect their own interests; without the backing of these super-powers the Jewish "state" cannot survive for a month, and the Western powers themselves look upon the Israelis as their henchmen. The "Israeli state" has been living, as the Holy Qur'ān says, "through a rope from men," and, even at that, living as a parasite on the Western powers. So, there is no real occasion to have a misgiving about what the Holy Qur'ān has said on the subject.

Moreover, the half of Palestine which the Jews have usurped and the parasite state they have set up there is no more than a spot on the map of the world. As against this, we have vast expanses of the globe covered by Christian states, by Muslim states, and even by the states of people who do not believe in Allah at all. Can this tiny blot on the map and that too under the American-British umbrella, negate the disgrace which Allah has made to settle upon the Jews?

Verse 62

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَىٰ وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝

Surely, those who believed in Allah, and those who became Jewish, and Christians, and the Sabeans -- whosoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds -- for them, with their Lord, is their reward, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. (Verse 62)

The previous verse spoke of how the Israelites drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah through their habitual insolence and disobedience. Now, this account may lead the listeners, or the Jews themselves, to suppose that, in view of such transgression, their *Taubah* (repentance), if they agree to offer it, would not be acceptable to Allah. In order to dispel such a misgiving, the present verse lays

down a general principle: no matter how a man has been behaving earlier, so long as he submits himself fully to the commandments of Allah in his beliefs and in his deeds both, he is acceptable to Allah, and will get his reward. It is obvious enough that after the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān, which is the last message of Allah, perfect obedience to Allah can only mean accepting Islam and following the Last Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.[23] The verse, in effect, assures everyone that once a man has accepted Islām, all his former transgressions, whether in the matter of beliefs or in that of deeds, will be forgiven, and he will become worthy of receiving the rewards of the other world.

Let us note, in passing, that nothing is definitely known as to the beliefs and the practices of the Sabeans, and different opinions have been expressed on the subject. (Most probably they used to worship the stars).

One might also ask why the verse mentions the Muslims, for if it is an invitation to Islam, there is no need to extend the invitation to those who have already accepted Islam. But if we keep in mind the richly concentrated style of the Holy Qur'ān, and try to look beyond the literal sense of the words into the implications and suggestions contained in the verse, we would find that the inclusion of the Muslim factor has added a new dimension to the meaning. It is as if a king should, in a similar situation, say that his laws are impartially applicable to all his subjects, and that whosoever obeys them shall receive his reward for obedience irrespective of whether he has earlier been a friend or a foe. Obviously, the friend has always been loyal and obedient, and the warning and the promise have really been addressed

23. Contrary to the flaccid fancies of some "modernizers" who are very happy with themselves over their "liberalism" and "tolerance", the present verse does not open the way to salvation for each and every "man of good will" irrespective of the creed he follows. If one reads the verse in its proper context and along with other relevant verses of the Holy Qur'ān, one will easily see that the verse, in fact, promises salvation in the other world only to those who accept Islām. It is an invitation to Islām extended to the Jews, the Christians, the Sabeans and, as a matter of fact, to the followers of all possible religions, and even to non-believers -- specific names only serve as examples.

to the foe. But the suggestion contained in such a formulation is that the favours of the king do not proceed from any personal attachment to the friends, but depend on the quality of obedience and loyalty, and hence the foes too will become worthy of his favours if they acquire the necessary quality. This is the *raison d'etre* of mentioning the Muslims along with the non-Muslims in this verse, which should never be taken to imply that salvation can be attained without accepting Islām.

We had better dispel another misunderstanding which is likely to arise from the wordings of the present verse -- and, which is actually being promoted by certain 'modernizers'. The verse mentions only two articles of faith of the Islamic creed -- faith in Allah and faith in the Day of Judgment. This should not be taken to mean that in order to attain salvation it is enough to have faith only in Allah and in the Day of Judgment. For, the Holy Qur'ān repeatedly declares that he who does not believe in the prophets, in angels and in the Books of Allah is not a Muslim. Faith in Allah is the first article in the Islamic creed, while faith in the Day of Judgment is the last. By mentioning only these two, the verse intends to say in a succinct manner that it is necessary to have faith in all the articles of the creed, from the first to the last. Moreover, it is through the prophets and the Books of Allah alone that man can acquire any knowledge of the essence and the attributes of Allah and of what is to happen on the Day of Judgment, while the Books of Allah are revealed to the prophets through an angel. So, it is not possible to have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment until and unless one has faith in the angels, in the Books of Allah and in the prophets.

Verse 63

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ
وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ○

And when We took pledge from you, and raised high above you the (Mount of) *Tūr*: "Hold fast to what We have given to you, and remember what is there in it, so that you may become God-fearing." (Verse 63)

Having received the Torah from Allah, Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) returned from Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and recited it to the

Israelites. The injunctions contained in the Book were rather rigorous, but their conduct and habits of mind really called for such strict discipline. To begin with, they replied that they would not obey the injunctions until and unless Allah Himself told them that it was His book. Seventy men, as we have related above, were selected to go to Mount *Tūr* and to hear Allah attest the authenticity of the Torah. On their return, they bore witness to the Torah being a Book of Allah, but added something on their own to what Allah had actually said. For, they told the Israelites that Allah had allowed them to act upon the injunctions only as much as they could, and had promised to forgive them for what they could not accomplish. They had always and instinctively been prone to rebellion against Allah, then, the injunctions were, no doubt, stern, and now they got a new pretext for being negligent. So, the Israelites flatly refused to obey the injunctions, insisting that it was beyond their endurance to act upon such harsh regulations. In reply to this insolence, Allah commanded the angels to raise Mount *Tūr* and let it hang in the air above their heads as a threat that if they did not fulfil their covenant with Allah, it would fall on them and crush them. The Israelites, then, had no choice but to submit.

A doubt is quite likely to arise here. The Holy Qur'ān says in another place that force should not be used to make a man change his religion, while in the present instance it appears that force is being used. But, in fact, force is not being used to make the Israelites change their religion, for they had already accepted Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a prophet of Allah, and willingly made a covenant with Allah that they would act upon the Book of Allah, if one was given to them. So, they now stand as rebels, and are being threatened with dire punishment for persisting in their rebellion. This is exactly how even a secular state deals with rebels, and how it adopts towards them an attitude quite different from that towards aliens or enemies, for it leaves only two ways open to the rebel -- either to submit himself, or to lose his life. That is why it is only an apostate (*Murtadd*) who is, according to the Islamic *Sharī'ah*, condemned to capital punishment, and not an outright disbeliever. Moreover, the Israelites were being threatened with death as criminals and offenders against the law which they acknowledged to be the divine law, but which they refused to obey.

Verse 64

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ
لَكُنتُم مِّنَ الْخَٰسِرِينَ ۝

Then even after that, you did turn away. So, had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy, you surely would have been among the losers.

(Verse 64)

The Israelites went against the Covenant they had made with Allah. The sin was so grave that one could have expected utter destruction and ruin to descend on them as a punishment. But Allah, in His mercy, spared them in so far as physical life is concerned, although they will have to pay for their treason in the other world. Allah's mercy is of two kinds. One is general and extends to believers and disbelievers alike -- its action is to be seen in the shape of worldly well-being and prosperity. The other is special, an pertains to believers alone -- it will manifest itself particularly in the other world in the shape of salvation and closeness to Allah.

It appears that the last phrase of the present verse has been addressed to the Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Since having faith in him is also a part of the Covenant, these Jews too have been included among those who had been guilty of infringement. In this verse, Allah asks them to realize that it is in His mercy alone that he has not, in spite of their treason, sent down on them the kind of catastrophic punishment in this world as used to descend on the other infidels and traitors who have gone before.

Since a number of authentic *aḥādīth* declare that it is the *barakah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that catastrophic punishments no longer descend on any people, some commentators have identified this particular mercy and grace of Allah with the sending down of Muḥammad ﷺ as a Prophet and Messenger of Allah.

In order to emphasize what the present verse has said, the next verse tells the story of another group of earlier transgressors and of the dreadful punishment which overtook them all of a sudden.

Verses 65 - 66

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ۝ فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

And certainly you have known those among you who transgressed in (the matter of) the Sabbath. So, We said to them, "Become apes, living in disgrace." Thus, We made it a deterrent for those around and after them -- and a lesson for the God-fearing. (Verses 65 - 66)

This episode belongs to the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd (David عليه السلام Allah had appointed Saturday as the Sabbath, or the sacred day, for the Israelites; it was specially set apart for prayers and worship, and hence fishing was prohibited on this day. But these people lived on the sea-shore, and were very fond of fish. Al-Qurṭubī says that the Israelites, at first, invented all sorts of clever pretences for catching fish on Saturday, and gradually started doing so openly. There now grew a division amongst them on this point. On the one hand were these transgressors, and, on the other, some scholars and pious men who tried to dissuade them from such disobedience. When the former paid no heed to them, the latter broke away altogether from the sinners, and began to live in a separate part of the town. One day they felt no sound was coming from the other part of the town. Growing curious, they went there and found that all the transgressors had been changed into apes. Qatādah says that the young ones had become apes, and the old ones swine. The apes could recognize their relatives and friends, and would approach them weeping out of remorse, and seeking their sympathy and help. Then all of them died after three days.

As to the question whether the apes and the swine we see today bear any kinship to these Israelites who had been metamorphosed, the correct position is that people who have been metamorphosed into beasts by Allah as a punishment cease to breed, and leave no progeny behind. According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Imām Muslim from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, some people asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether the apes and the swine were the descen-

dants of the metamorphosed Jews. The Holy Prophet ﷺ reminded them that apes and swine existed in the world even before, and said that when Allah sends down this particular kind of punishment on a people, the race comes to an end with this, and there is no further breeding.[24]

Let us now go back to the verse under discussion. The people who witnessed the event, or heard of it, were of two kinds - the disobedient and the obedient. For the disobedient, it served as a 'deterrent', an example and a warning, which persuaded them to repent of their disobedience. For the obedient, it was a lesson and a reminder that they should be steadfast in their obedience. It serves these two purposes even now.

Injunctions and related considerations

We have been saying that the Jews who were changed into apes had used certain ruses or pretences to justify their sin in their own eyes. This brings us to a rather delicate question of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Certain 'modernists' have quite shamelessly been busy maligning the master-jurists of Islam by suggesting that these mas-

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24. Some 'modernizing' Muslims have tried to explain away this metamorphosis by suggesting that these disobedient Jews did not actually and physically turn into beasts, but that the change was only psychological in so far as they acquired the evil characteristics of apes and swine. To say such a thing is to deny an explicit statement of the Holy Qur'ān, which no Muslim can do, if he wishes to remain a Muslim. Moreover, in denying the possibility of physical change, the 'modernizers' are also denying the power of Allah, and putting limitations on it. Even as a piece of literary exegesis, the 'modernist' interpretation is flimsy. For, even before the punishment fell on them, these Jews had been displaying the moral and psychological traits of beasts: the greed of swine and the craftiness of apes. Where was, then, the change which the Holy Qur'ān declares to be a punishment for the offenders and a warning for others? Our 'modernists' are, in fact, all too ready to swallow without batting an eye-lid the most preposterous and unfounded notions, only if they come from the West. So, they have complete certitude with regard to Darwin's speculation, that the apes evolved into man, although no verifiable data has yet been gathered to support the contention; but when it comes to the statement in the Holy Qur'ān that men were changed into apes, they look askance at it, although this kind of change is rationally and logically as possible as the other.

ters have invented very intricate "stratagems" (*Ḥiyal*, plural of *Ḥīlah*) for helping the rich and powerful to infringe the laws of the *Shari'ah* and get away with it. This is a petty calumny, and should not have been worthy of consideration except for the fact that such 'modernists' have had some success with the gullible and the ignorant by playing upon the Arabic word *Ḥīlah*. As everyone knows, the lexical meaning of a word is one thing, and its technical signification, when it is used as a term in some science, is another. In its literal sense, the word *Ḥīlah* no doubt means "a trick, a stratagem", but as a technical term in *Fiqh* it signifies a device for and a means of giving legitimacy to an action in a contingency by making certain necessary modifications in it in consonance with the *Sharī'ah*. Thus, it is not a way of by-passing the *Sharī'ah*, but of helping people to conform to it even in a situation where necessity or human weakness would compel them to go against it.

The present verse has a particular relevance to the question, and would help to clarify it a great deal. The transgression on the part of the Jews which the verse speaks of, and which drew upon them such dreadful punishment, was not a clear and explicit infringement of divine law, but the use of certain "tricks" which necessarily involved the negation of the divine commandment. For example, on Saturday they would tie one end of a cord to the tail of a fish and the other end to something on the shore, and leave the fish in the water; on Sunday, they would take it out and eat it. Such a ruse not only negates an injunction of the *Sharī'ah*, but is actually a mockery. That is why those who practised such "stratagems" were considered to be disobedient and rebellious, and subjected to dire punishment.

But this particular instance does in no way go to prove that the *Ḥiyal* are impermissible. We have explained the nature and purpose of such "devices" alone. Not only do they form an integral part of *Fiqh*, but some of them have actually been suggested by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself . For example, bartering a kilo of good dates for two kilos of bad dates is, according to the *Sharī'ah*, a kind of usury. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has suggested a "device" (*Ḥīlah*) for avoiding the infringement of this regulation in a situation where such a transaction becomes necessary - that is, instead of bartering one commodity for

another, one may employ the exchange value of money: first sell two kilos of bad dates for two rupees, and then with the two rupees thus obtained buy a kilo of good dates. The intention in using this "device" is to conform to the *Sharī'ah*, and not to by-pass it. The negation of the *Sharī'ah* is neither intended here, nor does it actually take place. This principle holds good in the case of all the *Hīyal* which the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) have proposed in order to save people from practicing what the *Sharī'ah* has prohibited. It is a travesty of the truth to compare them to or represent them as the "tricks" employed by the Jews to negate and mock the *Sharī'ah*.

Verse 67

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تَذْبَحُوْا بَقَرَةً ۭ قَالُوْٓا
اَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا ۭ قَالَ اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ۝

And when Musa said to his people, "Allah commands you to slaughter a cow." They said, "Are you making us a laughing stock?" He said, "I seek refuge with Allah that I be one of the ignorant." (Verse 67)

According to *Mirqat*, a commentary on *Mishkat*, a man among the Israelites wanted to marry a girl, but her father refused. The suitor was so incensed that he killed the father, and disappeared. It is mentioned in *Ma'ālim al-tanzīl* which says on the authority of *Kalbī* that Allah had not yet sent down any injunction with regard to man-slaughter. If it was so, this shows that the incident happened before the Torah was revealed. Anyhow, the Israelites requested Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام to tell them how to trace the culprit. Under the commandment of Allah, he asked them to sacrifice a cow. As was their regular habit, they started raising all kinds of doubts and objections, of which the next verses give us the details.

Verses 68 - 71

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا هِيَ ۭ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا
فَارِضٌ وَّلَا بِكْرٌ ۭ عَوَانٌۢ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۭ فَافْعَلُوْا مَا تُؤْمَرُوْنَ ۝ قَالُوا
ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا ۭ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ

صَفْرَآءُ فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النّٰظِرِيْنَ ○ قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ
لَّنَا مَا هِيَ اِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشٰبَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنَّآ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَمُهْتَدُوْنَ ○
قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُوْلٌ تُثِيْرُ الْاَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِى
الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا شِيَةَ فِيْهَا قَالُوا الْئٰنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَحُوْهَا
وَمَا كَادُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ○

They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us what sort she be." He said, "He says she be - a cow neither too old, nor too young - of some middle age in between. Now, do what you are being asked to do." They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He make it clear to us what colour she be." He said: "He says that she be a yellow cow, rich yellow in her colour, pleasing for all to look at." They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us of what sort she be, for we are confused about this cow, and if Allah wills, We shall certainly take the right course." He said, "He says that it be a cow which is not tractable for tilling the soil or in watering the fields, sound and without blemish." They said, "Now, you have come up with the truth." Then, they slaughtered her, although it did not appear they would do it. (Verses 68-71)

These Verses show how the Israelites were disposed to disobedience, and how this inclination expressed itself in different forms. The *Ḥadīth* says that if these people had obeyed Allah's commandment without raising so many doubts and asking unnecessary questions, such strict condition would not have been imposed on them, and the sacrifice of any cow whatsoever would have been accepted.

Verses 72 - 73

وَاِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادّٰرَءْتُمْ فِيْهَا وَاللّٰهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُوْنَ ○
فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوْهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذٰلِكَ يُحْيِ اللّٰهُ الْمَوْتٰى وَيُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ○

And when you killed a man, and began to push and pull

> **each other for it; while Allah was to bring forth what you were holding back. So, We said, "Strike him with a part of it." Similar to that, Allah revives the dead. And He shows you His signs, so that you may understand. (Verses 72-73)**

The murderer had his supporters who wanted to hide his crime, and hence began accusing different people. But Allah willed that the criminal should be brought to book, and appointed a miraculous way of identifying him -- that is, the dead body of the murdered man should be touched with a part of the flesh of the sacrificial cow. When this was done, the dead man came back to life, announced the name of his murderer, and died again.

This miraculous event is a manifestation of the omnipotence of Allah, and Holy Qur'ān presents it as an argument against those who deny the Resurrection of the dead for the Last Judgment. Verse 73 says that this precedent should induce people to make use of their reason, and see that what has happened in a past instance can as easily happen in a future instance.

With regard to this event one may ask as to why Allah made the resurrection of the dead man depend upon his being touched with a part of flesh when he had the power to bring the man back to life without the intervention of any such device; or, one may ask as to why the dead man should have been brought back to life when the name of the murderer could have been revealed even otherwise. In answer to this, we shall say that Allah is omnipotent, and does not act under any kind of compulsion, but that all His actions proceed from His all-embracing wisdom. Moreover, it is He alone who knows, and can know, the *raison d'etre* of what He does. The Sharī'ah does not oblige us to discover the *raison d'etre* of each and every divine act, nor is it necessary or possible that we should be able to comprehend the *raison d'etre* in each case. The best way in such a case is to accept what Allah or the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, and to keep quiet.

Let us say a word about the arrangement and sequence of the events. Verse 72 relates how a man was murdered, and how people started accusing each other. This is the beginning of the story which has been related earlier in Verses 67-71. This chronological order has

not been preserved in the narration, but inverted, and this re-arrangement has a subtle significance. This long section of the Sūrah (Chapter) has been dealing with the transgressions of the Israelites, and this is just what the Holy Qur'ān intends to bring out in narrating different stories, the narrating of stories not being an object in itself here. The present story is meant to show two misdeeds - firstly, committing a murder and then trying to hide it; secondly, raising uncalled-for objections to divine commandments. If the chronological order had been kept up, the readers would have supposed that it was only the first of these that was really intended, while the second was added only by way of completing the story. The present arrangement clearly shows that both the misdeeds have been equally emphasized.

Injunctions and related consideration

In this incident the statement of the murdered man was considered evidence for condemning the murderer, because Allah had informed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام through revelation that the man would, on coming back to life, speak the truth. Otherwise, one cannot be declared as being guilty of murder without proper evidence, the rules of which have been laid down by the *Sharī'ah*.

Verse 74

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً ۚ
وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهٰرُ ۚ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ
فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَآءُ ۚ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَمَا
اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ○

When, even after that your hearts were hardened, as if they were like the rocks, or still worse in hardness. For surely among the rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth, and there are others which burst out and water flows from them, and there are still others which fall down in fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. (Verse 74)

The Sūrah has been relating a number of incidents which show that the Israelites were always prone to disobedience and rebellion

and had to undergo punishment again and again. Such an experience should have taught them humility and obedience. On the contrary, their hearts became all the more hardened against divine guidance. This insensibility led them into further misdeeds and transgressions. The present verse describes their degeneracy, and warns them that Allah knows everything they have been doing, and will punish them for their evil deeds.

In contrasting the hearts of the Israelites with stones, the verse refers to three states of the latter: (1) Some stones give forth a great amount of water. (2) Others give forth only a small quantity. (3) Still others do not give forth water, but fall down from their place for fear of Allah.

The first two of these states are a matter of everyday observation, but the third may be subject to doubt, for the ability to feel fear requires reason and sensibility, and the stones, as one supposes, do not possess these faculties. But reason is not always a necessary requisite for the ability to feel fear - after all, animals do feel fear, even though they do not possess reason. Sensibility is, of course, necessary. But there is no rational argument which should deny sensibility to minerals. For sensibility depends on life, and the minerals may possibly possess a kind of subtle life which man may not be aware of. In fact, scientists have recently discovered the signs of life and sensibility in minerals too. Anyhow, an explicit statement in the Holy Qur'ān carries a validity and an authority which no physical science or rational argument can dispute.

Then, we do not claim that fear of Allah is always the only cause which makes a stone fall down. For, the Holy Qur'ān itself says that this cause operates only in the case of some stones. So, there may be different causes which make stones fall down; some of these causes may be purely physical, while one of them may be the fear of Allah.

The order in which the three kinds of stones have been mentioned is very subtle, and, in view of the meaning and purpose intended, extremely expressive and significant. The verse places in the highest degree those stones whose affectivity is so strong that rivers gush forth from them, and provide sustenance to beasts and men. In

contrast to them, it has been suggested, the hearts of the Jews are so hard that they are incapable of feeling any sympathy for their fellow-men even in suffering and pain, and hence incapable of wishing to do them good. In the second degree come the stones which do serve the creatures of Allah, but to a lesser extent. But the hearts of Jews are harder than even these. To the lowest degree of affectivity belong those stones which do not benefit anyone, but can at least 'feel' the fear of Allah. But the Jews are devoid of even this minimum degree of sensitivity.

Verse 75

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ
كَلَامَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُوْنَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوْهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ○

Do you still fancy that they will believe you, although a group of them used to hear the word of Allah, and then, after having understood it, used to distort it knowingly? (Verse 75)

The Muslims used to take great pains in trying to make the Jews accept Islam. Having recounted so many stories of the perversity of the Jews, the Holy Qur'ān points out to the Muslims that they cannot expect such a people to be sensible, and asks them not to worry much about them. For, some of the Jews have been committing an even more heinous sin - they used to change and distort the Word of Allah in spite of knowing the ignominy of such a deed. So, the Holy Qur'ān wants the Muslims to realize that men who are so enslaved to their desires and so shameless in their pursuit of evil, cannot be expected to listen to anyone.

The "Word of Allah" mentioned in the verse refers to the Torah which the Jews had "heard" from the prophets, and the distortion pertains to the changes made in the words themselves or in the sense or in both; or it refers to the words of Allah which the seventy men had heard directly on the Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) where they had gone to seek divine confirmation of what Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had been telling and the distortion pertains to their declaration before their people that Allah had promised to forgive them if they could not act upon certain commandments.

The Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ may

not have themselves been involved in some of these transgressions, but since they did not abhor the misdeeds of their forefathers, they are to be considered as their counterparts.

Verse 76

وَاِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَاِذَا خَلَا بَعۡضُهُمۡ اِلٰى
بَعۡضٍ قَالُوۡۤا اَتُحَدِّثُوۡنَهُمۡ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ لِيُحَآجُّوۡكُمۡ بِهٖ
عِنۡدَ رَبِّكُمۡ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۝

And when they meet those who believe, they say, "We believe." But when some of them meet others in private, they say, "Do you tell them what Allah has disclosed to you so that they may thereby argue against you before your Lord? Have you, then, no sense?" (Verse 76)

Some of the Jews, seeing the growing power of the Muslims in Madinah and around it, pretended to have accepted Islam. In order to assure the Muslims of their sincerity and to win their favour, these hypocrites would now and then disclose to them that the Torah itself had given out the good tidings of the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and mentioned the Holy Qur'ān. But when they met other Jews who openly declared their adherence to Judaism, they would admit that they were only trying to deceive the Muslims, and were otherwise quite loyal to their own faith. On such occasions, those of the other group used to reprimand them for revealing to the Muslims what they themselves were trying to keep concealed, for a knowledge of the relevant verses of the Torah could be very useful for the Muslims in order to defeat the Jews in their argument.

Verses 77 - 79

اَوَلَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوۡنَ وَمَا يُعۡلِنُوۡنَ ۝ وَمِنۡهُمۡ
اُمِّيُّوۡنَ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ الۡكِتٰبَ اِلَّاۤ اَمَانِىَّ وَاِنۡ هُمۡ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوۡنَ ۝
فَوَيۡلٌ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ يَكۡتُبُوۡنَ الۡكِتٰبَ بِاَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ ثُمَّ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ هٰذَا مِنۡ
عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ لِيَشۡتَرُوۡا بِهٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِيۡلًا ؕ فَوَيۡلٌ لَّهُمۡ مِّمَّا كَتَبَتۡ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ
وَوَيۡلٌ لَّهُمۡ مِّمَّا يَكۡسِبُوۡنَ ۝

Are they not aware that Allah knows what they conceal and what they manifest? And some among them are illiterate who have no knowledge of the Book but have some fancies, and they do nothing but make conjectures. So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, "This is from Allah", so that they may gain a small price out of it. Then, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn. (Verses 77-79)

Allah reminds the Jews that He is omniscient, and knows what they try to keep concealed as well as what they say or do openly. So, it would make no difference at all, if the hypocrites tried to conceal their infidelity from the Muslims, or the other group, not to disclose the verses of the Torah which speak of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . For, Allah Himself has, on different occasions, informed the Muslims in the Holy Qur'ān as to the hypocrisy of certain Jews and as to the testimony of the Torah also.

Verse 77 deals with the educated ones among the Jews, while Verse 78 speaks of those who were unlettered. These men had no knowledge of the Torah, and were even deficient in their understanding. Then, the Jewish scholars did not give them correct or proper information about their religion. No wonder, their minds were stuffed only with baseless superstitions which they found very pleasant and flattering.

Since the dishonesty of their scholars was the real cause of their superstitiousness, the crime of the former was greater than that of the latter. So, Verse 79 turns to the Jewish scholars. They were greedy and self-seeking, and in order to please the people for receiving money and respect from them, they used to misrepresent divine injunctions, going so far as to change the words of the Torah or distort the sense, pretending all the while that this was just what Allah had said or meant. The Verse 79 announces a grievous punishment for these two sins - distorting the Word of Allah and earning money by doing so.

A doctrinal point

Verse 78 says that the illiterate Jews follow their ظنّ : *Ẓann*, that is to say, their fancies or conjectures. Some people do not pay any attention to the context in which the word has been used here, and

come to the erroneous conclusion that it is not legitimate to accept or follow any view or injunction based on *Ẓann*, which they always translate as "a fanciful supposition." This, no doubt, is one of the lexical meanings of the word, but only one. Let us explain that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word *Ẓann* in three ways:-

(1) To signify perfect certitude -"Those who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord" (2:46). (2) To signify the greatest likelihood - "And he said to him whom he thought was the more likely of the two to be released from the prison" (12:42). (3) To signify a mere fanciful supposition - as in the present verse. The *Ẓann* which the Holy Qur'ān prohibits us to follow is that of the third kind. This verse condemns the Jews for having followed this kind of *Ẓann* which consists in a fanciful opinion that is not supported by a respectable argument or goes against a valid one. On the contrary, it is necessary to follow the *Ẓann* of the first two kinds. When certain *aḥādīth* or certain arguments and conclusions in the *Sharī'ah* are described as resting on *Ẓann*, it is done according to the second signification of the word. One cannot avoid this kind of *Ẓann* in any sphere of life, and the *Sharī'ah* requires us to accept and follow it. Certain verses of the Holy Qur'ān, of course, condemn those who follow their *Ẓann*, but to apply this condemnation to all the possible cases, and to use such verses for rejecting all the legitimate arguments and injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* based on *Ẓann* is to betray one's ignorance of the Holy Qur'ān.

Verse 80

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَةً ۚ قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ ۖ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

And they say, "The fire shall not touch us but for a few days." Say, "Have you taken a pledge from Allah and Allah will not go against His promise? Or, do you say about Allah what you do not know?" (Verse 80)

The claim of the Jews that they would not be sent to Hell for their sins, or, if at all, only for a few days, has been interpreted by the Commentators in different ways. One of them is as follows:-

The principle is common to all the Sharī'ahs that if a believer commits sins, he will receive a punishment in Hell for some time and in accordance with the degree and nature of his sins, but as he possesses *'Īmān* (faith), he will not be assigned to Hell for ever, and will be released after having served his term. Now, the argument on which the assertion of the Jews was based was that since the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had not, in their view, been abrogated, they were true believers (*Mumins*), and had not turned into infidels (*Kāfirs*) by denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) and of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ; hence - so the argument ran - if they were sent to Hell in punishment of some sin, they would again be taken out after a few days. This false assertion is, thus based on another false assertion. The Torah never declares that the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is meant to last for ever. To claim perpetuity for it is an unfounded and false assertion, and hence the Jews who made such a claim and denied the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ, must on account of this denial be held to be infidels and disbelievers (*Kāfirs*). And no Book of Allah holds out to the infidels the promise that they would be released from Hell after a while. The present verse refers to such a promise as the "pledge" of Allah. Since Allah has never made such a promise, it goes to show that the Jews were making a baseless claim.

Verses 81 - 82

بَلٰى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَّاَحَاطَتْ بِهٖ خَطِيْٓـئَتُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝

Why not? Those who commit evil and are besieged by their sin, those are people of the Fire - there they shall remain for ever. And those who believe, and do good deeds, such are people of Paradise - there they shall remain for ever. (Verses 81 - 82)

Having refuted the claim of the Jews as baseless, the Holy Qur'ān lays down the divine law in this regard. Those who commit evil deeds knowingly and deliberately so that evil takes hold of them completely,

leaving no trace of goodness - such men shall go to the Hell, and live there for ever, without any intermission or release. But those who believe in Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ - whose *Sharī'ah* has now abrogated all the earlier Sharī'ahs and who do good deeds in conformity with the Islamic *Sharī'ah*,- it is these men who shall go to Paradise, and will live there for ever.

Let us explain how evil can take hold of a man so completely that no trace of goodness is left. This kind of thing happens only to infidels (*Kāfirs*), and not to Muslims, even when they are sinners. For, no good deed on the part of an infidel is acceptable to Allah on account of his infidelity; even the good deeds he has done before his apostasy and infidelity are lost, and rendered null and void. That is why on the Day of Judgment, infidels will have to show nothing but evil, in punishment of which they shall live in Hell for ever. On the contrary, men of faith will, to begin with, have the greatest and highest good deed to their credit - namely, faith (*'Īmān*) itself. Then, their secondary good deeds too are recorded in their account. So, they cannot be devoid of all goodness, and evil cannot be said to have taken hold of them completely.

In short, the infidel, according to this divine law, must always live in Hell. Since Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) was not the last prophet, but was followed by two other prophets, Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) and Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ, the Jews turned into infidels by denying these two prophets. So, in accordance with this law, they too will be assigned to Hell for ever like other infidels, and their claim that they would be released from Hell after few days can now be seen to be totally false and baseless.

Verse 83

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآئِيْلَ لَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ۗ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ
اِحْسَانًا وَّذِي الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَ قُوْلُوْا لِلنَّاسِ
حُسْنًا وَّاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۭ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا
مِّنْكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ O

And when We made the children of Israel take a pledge:

"You shall not worship anyone but Allah; and to parents you shall be good, and to near of kin and to orphans and the needy. And say to the people what is good, and be steadfast in *Salāh*, and pay *Zakāh*." Then, you went back (on your word), all but a few among you, and you are used to turning away. (Verse 83)

This verse speaks of the pledge which Allah had made the Israelites take, and the few people it refers to as having been true to the pledge were those who acted upon the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) as long as it was in force, and when it was abrogated, followed the *Sharī'ah* of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) This verse brings out the basic elements common to Islam and all the earlier Sharī'ahs: *Tauhid* (the doctrine of Unity or Oneness); service to one's parents, relations, orphans and the needy; being gentle in speaking to all human beings; *Salāh* and *Zakāh*.

(2) The verse asks us to adopt a gentle tone and an open-hearted manner in speaking to others, whether they are good or evil, pious or impious, orthodox or aberrant, followers of *Sunnah* or adherents to partitive innovations in it. In religious matter, however, one should not try to hide the truth for the sake of pleasing people or of winning their approval. The Holy Qur'ān tells us that when Allah sent Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn (Moses and Aaron عليهم السلام) to the Pharaoh, He instructed them to use gentle and soft words (20:42). None of us who addresses another today can be superior to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام , nor can the man addressed be viler than the Pharaoh.

Talha ibn 'Umar recounts that once he said to the great master of the Sciences of Exegesis and *Ḥadīth*, 'Atā', "One can see around you people who are not quite orthodox in their beliefs. As for me, I am rather short-tempered. If such people come to me, I deal with them harshly." 'Ata' replied, "Do not behave like this," and, reciting the present verse, he added, "Allah has commanded us to speak to people politely. When Jews and Christians all are to be treated like this, would this commandment not apply to a Muslim, no matter what kind of a man he is?" (Qurṭubī)

Verse 84

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ
أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ۝

And when We made you take a pledge: "You shall not shed one another's blood, and you shall not drive out one another from your homes." Then you agreed being yourselves the witness. (Verse 84)

This verse is a supplement to the previous verse, and speaks of the other articles of the pledge taken by the Israelites. They had agreed not to kill one another by engaging themselves in an internecine war, and also not to send their men into exile - that is to say, not to harass a man so as to force him to migrate.

They had willingly taken this pledge. Now, it may sometimes happen that one does not express one's willingness in so many words, but the manner of his speech suggests it. The agreement of the Israelites was not of this order, but as clear and explicit as the statement of a witness usually is.

Verse 85

ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ
دِيَارِهِمْ تَظٰهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۚ وَإِنْ يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسٰرٰى
تُفْدُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ ۚ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ
الْكِتٰبِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ ۚ فَمَا جَزَآءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذٰلِكَ مِنْكُمْ
إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلٰٓى أَشَدِّ
الْعَذَابِ ۗ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

Yet, here you are, killing one another, and driving a group of your own out of their homes, supporting each other against them in sin and aggression -- and if they came to you as prisoners, you would ransom them, though their very expulsion was unlawful for you! Do you, then, believe in some part of the Book, and disbelieve in some other? So, what can be the recompense of those among you who do that, except disgrace in

present life? And, on Doomsday, they shall be turned to the most severe punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. (Verse 85)

This verse recounts how the Israelites broke the pledge they had willingly made. Allah had laid down three special injunctions for the Israelites: (1) They should not kill one another in an internecine war. (2) They should not force their own people into exile. (3) If they found a man from amongst them a prisoner of war, they should pay a ransom, and get him released. The Israelites disregarded the first two injunctions, and acted upon the third alone which they supposed easier to be carried out.

It happened like this. There lived in Madīnah two tribes, the *Aws* and the *Khazraj*, who were hostile to each other, and would often go to war. In the environs of Madīnah, there also lived two tribes of the Jews, the Banī Qurayẓah and the Banī Naḍīr. The former had friendly relations with the *Aws*, and the latter with the *Khazraj*. When the Aws and the *Khazraj* went to war against each other, the two tribes of the Jews also took part in the battle, each on the side of its own friends. In these battles, many Jews lost their lives or were rendered homeless as much as the non-Jews. In other words, the Jews of the Banī Qurayẓah tribe had a share in the slaughter and exile of the Jews of the Banī Nadīr tribe, and vice versa. However, when some of the Jews became prisoners of war, each of the two Jewish groups would persuade their respective friends among the non-Jews to accept a ransom and to release the prisoners. When they were asked why they showed such a solicitude for the prisoners, they would say that it was obligatory for them to get prisoners released. But when someone objected to their helping the non-Jews in slaughtering the Jews, they used to reply that it would be a real disgrace if they did not go to the aid of their friends, even if they were not Jews.

So, the present verse exposes their duplicity and their perversity. The Holy Qur'ān indicts their behaviour as "sin and aggression," and this suggests that the Israelites were infringing on two kinds of rights -- the right of Allah, by disobeying Him; and the right of His creatures, by inflicting pain and loss on them.

The verse proceeds to reprimand them for accepting certain

injunctions laid down in the Torah, while rejecting others, and following their own whims in both the cases. At the end, this long verse announces the grave punishment for such misdeeds the Israelites will have to bear in this world as well as in the other.

Let it be clearly understood that the Jews referred to in this verse had already become infidels (*Kāfirs*) by refusing to accept and affirm the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ . But instead of referring to this aspect of their infidelity, the verse points out another aspect. It reprimands them for having faith (*'Īmān*) only in some part of the Book (Torah) and not having faith in some other. If we take the words of the present verse literally, it means that the Jews had become infidels by not having faith in some parts (that is to say, some injunctions) of the Torah. For, a Divine Book has to be accepted as a whole; to reject a part is to reject the whole, and clearly amounts to disbelief and infidelity (*Kufr*). But if we interpret the present verse in a different way, and take it to be reprimanding the Jews for not acting upon certain injunctions, then a question would arise here: How is it that the verse delineates their infringement of certain commandments as *Kufr* or infidelity, although a believer cannot be considered an infidel so long as he accepts, at least in principle, the distinctions between the *Ḥalāl* (lawful) and the *Ḥarām* (unlawful) exactly as laid down by the *Sharī'ah*? The answer to the question is that when a sin is very grave, the idiom of the *Sharī'ah* sometimes delineates it as *Kufr* (infidelity) in order to emphasize its gravity and its moral nature. This is also what the *ḥadīth* intends to do when it says: مَنْ تَرَكَ الصَّلَاةَ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ :"He who gave up the *Salāh* wilfully became an infidel."

This second interpretation does not, however, attenuate or modify the *Kufr* (infidelity) of the Jews of which they had already been guilty by denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ .

The verse announces that the Jews will have to bear a punishment not only in the other world, but in this world too - in the shape of humiliation and disgrace. It took place as it had been foretold. In the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, the Jews of the Bani Qurayzah tribe had to lose their lives or to undergo imprisonment, and those of the Banī Naḍīr tribe were expelled for having broken the pact they had earlier made with the Muslims.

A doctrinal point

Verse 85 announces the "punishment" for Jews. One may very well ask here why the direst punishment should be reserved for the Jews, and not for atheists, for the Jews at least believe in Allah. The famous Commentator 'Ālūsī says in his "Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī" that every punishment meted out to the infidels will be "the direst" in the sense that it will have no end or limit. So, what the verse implies is not that the punishment given to the Jews will be more severe than the one given to all the other infidels, but that they will be given the kind of punishment which is "the direst" in the sense of having no end or limit. In other words, the verse suggests that the punishment given to the infidels will be more severe than the one given to Muslim sinners. But if there are going to be different degrees in the punishment meted out to different kinds of infidels, it does not in any way go against the implications of this verse. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 86

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْحَيَوٰةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْاٰخِرَةِ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ
الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُونَ ۝

Those are the ones who bought the worldly life at the cost of the Hereafter. So, punishment shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be helped. (Verse 86)

This verse explains why the Jews will have to undergo such a severe punishment. They have been disobeying Allah in order to satisfy their desires and to enjoy worldly pleasures; they have also sacrificed for these things their salvation in the other world. Their sin being so great, Allah will not reduce or mollify their punishment, nor will He allow anyone to intercede on their behalf.

Verse 87

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ بِالرُّسُلِ وَاٰتَيْنَا
عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَيَّدْنٰهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ اَفَكُلَّمَا جَآءَكُمْ
رَسُولٌۢ بِمَا لَا تَهْوٰىٓ اَنْفُسُكُمُ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا
تَقْتُلُونَ ۝

> **And, indeed, We gave Mūsā the Book, and after him We sent messengers, one following the other; and We gave clear signs to 'Īsā, the son of Mariam (Jesus, the son of Mary), and supported him with the Holy Spirit. Then, how is it that every time a prophet came to you with what does not meet your desire, you grew arrogant? So, you falsified a group (of the messengers) and killed others. (Verse 87)**

The Qur'ān again reminds the Israelites how Allah in His mercy forgave them their transgressions again and again, and provided them with all the means of guidance. First of all, He gave them a Divine Book, the Torah, through Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام); then, sent them a number of prophets; and, at the end of this line, sent down Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) along with clear and irrefutable evidences of his prophethood, like the Evangel and miracles, and appointed the Archangel Jibrā'il (Gabriel عليه السلام) to give him support.

The Archangel Jibra'il has often been called "Rūḥ al-Qudus" (the Holy Spirit) in the Noble Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. For example, in Verse 16:102 - قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ - "Say: the Holy Spirit has brought it (the Noble Qur'an) down;" or in a couplet of the poet and blessed Companion Ḥassān ibn Thābit, reported in the *Ḥadīth*:

وجبريل رسول الله فينا
وروح القدس ليس له كفاء

Jibrā'il, the messenger of Allah, comes to us;
he is the Holy Spirit, the incomparable."

Allah helped and supported Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام through Jibrā'il عليه السلام in several ways. (1) He was conceived through the breath of the Archangel. (2) Jibrā'il عليه السلام protected him against being touched by Satan at the time of this birth. (3) The Archangel always accompanied him in order to defend him against the hostility of the Jews. (4) It was through him that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised to the heavens.

In spite of all these divine favours, the Jews persisted in their rebellion. They were so stubborn in the worship of their desires, that whenever the prophets brought to them certain divine injunctions which did not please them, the Jews would deny the prophets -- they

denied even Sayyidnā 'Īsā --, or would kill them outright -- for example, they dealt in this vile manner with Sayyidnā Zakariyyā (Zachariah) and Sayyidnā Yāhya (John the Baptist) عليهم السلام .

Verse 88

وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيْلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ O

And they said, "Our hearts are veiled." Rather, Allah has cast damnation upon them for their disbelief. So, they believe just a little. (Verse 88)

The Jews used to say sarcastically that their hearts were "veiled", by which they meant that their hearts were so well protected against Islam that it could never touch them. This was their way of congratulating themselves on being staunch in their belief. The Holy Qur'ān points out that this is not the firmness of faith, but a damnation, for they deny Islam which now is the true religion, and stick to a religion which has been abrogated. They, consequently, possess only "a little" faith (*'Īmān)*. Since a little faith is not acceptable, they turn out to be infidels.

The little faith" which they possessed pertained to the doctrines which are common to Islām and Judaism - for example, belief in Allah, or belief in the Day of Judgment. But they did not accept Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a prophet, and the Holy Qur'ān as the Word of Allah. So, their faith was not complete.

If the Verse describes 'the little faith' as *'Īmān,* it does so only in the lexical sense, for *'Īmān* signifies total certitude, even if it pertains to certain things, and not to others. But from the point of view of the *Sharī'ah*, such a partial faith cannot be described as *'Īmān*. The *Sharī'ah* would accept as valid only that *'Īmān* which affirms with certitude each and everything that the *Sharī'ah* requires one to affirm.

Verse 89

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ كِتٰبٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُوْنَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ

مَّا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهٖ ۚ فَلَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۝

And when there came to them a Book from Allah, which confirms what was with them, while earlier, they used to seek help against those who disbelieved, yet when there came to them that they did identify, they denied it. So the curse of Allah is upon the disbelievers. (Verse 89)

The Torah had in several places foretold the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . In fact, the Jews themselves used to tell the Arabs that a new prophet and a new Divine Book was soon to come. But when the Holy Qur'ān came down from Allah, and even when they had recognized its authenticity, the Jews denied it out of sheer spite.

The verse says that the Holy Qur'ān confirms the Torah - it means that the Holy Qur'ān is a concrete evidence of the truth of the prophecies made in the Torah with regard to the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of the Holy Qur'ān. One who believes in the Torah cannot justifiably deny the Holy Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ , for such a denial would involve a denial of the Torah itself.

Knowledge is not enough for *'Īmān*

One may want to know why the Holy Qur'ān calls the Jews *Kāfirīn* (infidels), when they did recognize the truth as truth, which should qualify them to be called "believers." Let us explain that *'Īmān* (faith) does not merely mean "knowing the truth", but really signifies "accepting the truth and affirming it deed-wise." Otherwise, Satan too will have to be called a believer, for he knows fully well what the truth is. In fact, this knowledge of the truth on the part of Satan intensifies the gravity of his *Kufr* (infidelity) all the more.

However, the next verse attributes the infidelity of the Jews to their malice.

Verse 90

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهٖۤ اَنْفُسَهُمْ اَنْ يَّكْفُرُوْا بِمَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بَغْيًا اَنْ
يُّنَزِّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ۚ فَبَآءُوْ
بِغَضَبٍ عَلٰى غَضَبٍ ۚ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ۝

> **Vile is that for which they have sold out their selves: that they should deny what Allah has revealed, grudging that Allah should send down some of His bounty to whomsoever He wills from among His servants. So, they came out with wrath upon wrath. And for unbelievers there is humiliating punishment. (Verse 90)**

Prophethood cannot be earned through one's own efforts or one's own merit; it is a special grace which Allah bestows on whomsoever He likes. But the Jews were so envious and malicious that they denied the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Qur'ān out of sheer spite. In doing so, they were questioning the will of Allah Himself. Thus, they earned divine wrath in two ways - firstly, for denying a true prophet; and secondly, for their envy and malice.

The Holy Qur'ān says that the Jews will have to undergo a punishment which would involve not only pain, but also disgrace and abasement. The latter condition has been added to suggest that this kind of punishment is peculiar to the infidels, and is not meant for a true Muslim at all, for a Muslim, no matter how great his sins are, will be punished for the purpose of being purified, not for being disgraced.

The next verse reports what the Jews used to say with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, which clearly shows their envy and malice as well as their infidelity (*Kufr*).

Verse 91

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَآ أَنزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوا نُؤْمِنُ بِمَآ أُنزِلَ
عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَآءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ
فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنۢبِيَآءَ اللّٰهِ مِن قَبْلُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ○

> **And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed," they say, "We believe in what has been revealed to us" -- and they deny what is beyond, whereas that is the truth, confirming what is with them. Say, "Why then have you been slaying the prophets of Allah earlier, if you were believers?" (Verse 91)**

The Jews flatly refused to believe in any Book of Allah -- like the Evangel or the Holy Qur'ān - except in the Torah. This denial is a clear evidence of their infidelity (*Kufr*). Moreover, they also used to add that they believe in the Torah, for it had been sent down to them. This comes to mean that they denied the other Books just because they had not been sent down to them. Such an argument betrays their envy and malice.

The Holy Qur'ān refutes their argument in three ways:-

(1) When the truth and authenticity of the other Books has been established on the basis of irrefutable arguments, what does, then, this denial mean? If they had any doubts as to the arguments on the basis of which authenticity was being claimed for these Books, they could very well have voiced this doubt, and satisfied themselves on this point. But why this flat refusal to believe?

(2) The other Books, like the Holy Qur'ān, confirm the Torah. If one denies them, one at the same time denies the Torah itself.

(3) To slay a prophet is tantamount to infidelity (*Kufr*), according to all the Divine Books. Moreover, the prophets whom the Jews had killed were themselves Israelites, and their teachings, were based on the injunctions of the Torah. But the Jews not only killed these prophets, but also accepted the killers as their chiefs. This is a direct denial of the Torah, and falsifies their claim that they believe in the Torah.

In short, nothing that the Jews say or do is acceptable and valid from any possible point of view.

The next verses proceed to refute the Jews on several other counts.

Verse 92

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ مُّوسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَنْتُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ O

And certainly Moses came to you with clear signs, then you took to yourselves the calf thereafter -- and you were transgressors. (Verse 92)

The "clear signs" mentioned in the verse refers to the miracles which had manifested themselves even before the Torah was given to Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) -- for example, his staff that turned into a snake, the palm of his hand which shone brightly, the splitting of the sea to make a path for the Israelites, etc. These miracles were meant to affirm the Oneness of Allah and His omnipotence, and to provide an evidence for the prophethood of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام.

In refutation of the Jews, the verse points out that although they lay a claim to *'Īmān* (faith), yet have been falling into the sin of *Shirk* (association), which involves a denial not only of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام but even of Allah Himself.

Although the Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, did not themselves take part in the worship of the golden calf, yet they respected such of their forefathers as had done so, and took their side. So, for all practical purposes, they too were guilty of the same sin.

The verse also suggests that no wonder if these people, whose forefathers denied Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, should now be denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Verse 93

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأُشْرِبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ○

And when We took pledge from you, and raised high the (Mount of) *Tūr* above you: "Hold fast to what We have given you, and listen" -- they said, "We have heard and disobeyed." And, on account of their denial, they were soaked with the love of the calf in their hearts. Say: "Evil is that which your faith enjoins upon you, if you are believers." (Verse 93)

In refuting the claim of the Jews to be authentic and true believers, the Holy Qur'ān again recounts an incident which it has

already referred to in Verse 63. When the Israelites succeeded, with the help of Allah, in escaping from Egypt and crossing the sea, they came upon a people who used to worship idols. They found this cult so attractive that they requested Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) to fabricate a visible and concrete god for them too. When he reprimanded them, they realized their error, and offered repentance. But repentance has many degrees. Since their repentance was not of a very high order, the darkness of their error did not altogether leave their hearts, but continued to grow, and finally manifested itself in the worship of the golden calf. As an act of penance, some of them had to be slain, and others, as some commentators report, were forgiven and not slain. Possibly the repentance of these latter was again of a low order. As for those who had not indulged in the worship of the calf, they did not hate the action of the worshippers of the calf as much as they should have. So, their hearts too carried a trace of the sin of association (*shirk*). So, either through the feebleness of their repentance or through a want of proper hatred for infidelity, their hearts became indolent in religious matters, so much so that when Allah asked them to take a pledge to follow the injunctions of the Torah steadfastly, Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) was suspended over their heads to threaten them.

This verse reports the Jews as having replied that they had heard the Command of Allah, but they would not obey, or would not be able to obey. It means that out of sheer fright they said (only with their tongues) that they had heard (that is to say, accepted) the Command of Allah. But there was no real consent in their hearts, and their posture and attitude was such as if they were saying that they would not or could not obey.

Having referred to such example of their perversity and rebellion, the Holy Qur'ān asks the Jews to have a look at themselves and also at their claim to genuine faith. Could a true faith ever inspire men to such deeds? If it is their brand of "faith" which leads them into such grave sins, then it cannot be a true faith. Hence their claim to be true believers is evidently false.

Verses 94 - 95

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِ
النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۝ وَلَنْ يَّتَمَنَّوْهُ اَبَدًاۢ
بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝

Say: "If the Last Abode near Allah is for you purely, short of all people, then make a wish for death, if you are true." But they will never wish for it because of what their hands have sent ahead. And Allah is all-aware of the unjust. (Verses 94 - 95)

The Jews used to claim that the blessings of the other world were specially reserved for them, and were not, meant for any other people. Certain other verses of the Holy Qur'ān too refer to such a claim on the part of the Jews, and also of the Christians: قَالُوْا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدَةً : "They say: The fire will not touch us but for a few days" (2:80), وَقَالُوْا لَنْ يَّدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُوْدًا أَوْ نَصٰرٰى :"And they say: No one will enter Paradise except he who is a Jew or Christian" (2:111), وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ وَالنَّصٰرٰى نَحْنُ أَبْنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَأَحِبَّآؤُهٗ :"And the Jews and the Christians said: We are the sons of Allah and His close friends" (5:18). What they meant in making such a claim was that since their own faith was the true one, they must certainly attain salvation in the other world -- the repentant and the forgiven being admitted to Paradise from the very beginning, the sinners finding release from the fires of Hell after undergoing a punishment for a few days, and the obedient receiving a welcome like sons and beloved friends.

The use of certain improper expressions like "sons of Allah" notwithstanding, these claims are in themselves quite correct, provided that they pertain to people who follow a true and valid faith. But the Jews (and the Christians as well) were still following a faith which had been abrogated, and was thus no longer valid -- a fact which nullified their claim. So, the Holy Qur'ān has refuted the claim again and again in different ways, and the present verse has adopted a special mode. The habitual method of settling a dispute is to have a discussion and let both the parties present their own arguments. Since the Jews knew they could not win, they fought shy of this normal way. So, the

Holy Qur'ān suggests an abnormal method, which would not call for much knowledge or understanding, but only put a little strain on the tongue. The proposed trial consists in this -- if the Jews are so sure of the blessings of the other world being reserved for themselves, they should declare that they wish to die, and this declaration would establish them as being genuine in their faith; but if they refuse to accept the challenge, it would show that they were liars. The Holy Qur'ān also predicts that they would never have the courage to go through the trial.

In view of their hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , one could expect them to take up such a simple challenge very zealously. But they knew very well in their heart of hearts that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims stood for the truth, while they themselves were the champions of falsehood, and were, in actual fact, infidels. So, they refused to go through the trial, for they were struck with awe, and feared that as soon as they had expressed the wish to die, death would come over them, and they would be sent to Hell. This recalcitrance is, thus, in itself an evidence of the truth of Islam.

Here we must note that the trial was proposed not for all the Jews of all the ages, but specially for those who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and who used to deny him out of sheer envy and malice, in spite of having recognized that he was a genuine prophet.

Nor should one raise the doubt here that they had perhaps accepted the challenge, and "wished" for death in their hearts, as the Holy Qur'ān seems to ask. For one, the Holy Qur'ān itself reports the prediction that they would never "wish for it." Secondly, if they could wish for death in their hearts, they must have declared it orally too, for their victory lay in just such a declaration, and this was a very easy way of refuting the Holy Prophet ﷺ . But they did not avail themselves of this opportunity.

Nor can one suppose that they did make an oral declaration, for the fact has not been reported, and thus has not come down to us. Such a supposition would be wrong, because the opponents of Islam have always outnumbered its adherents, and if such a thing had happened, they must have been trumpeting it aloud to show to the

world that the Jews had successfully passed the test proposed by the Holy Qur'ān itself.

Verse 96

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلٰى حَيٰوةٍ ۚ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ أَشْرَكُوْا ۚ
يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ۚ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحْزِحِهٖ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ
يُّعَمَّرَ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ○

And you shall surely find them, of men, the most avid for life -- even more than the polytheists. Of them, one would love to be aged a thousand years. But it will not remove him from punishment to be so aged. And Allah is watchful of what they do. (Verse 96)

This verse shows the basic weakness of the Jews which did not allow them to accept the challenge proposed in Verse 94, and thus exposes the hollowness of their claim to the blessings of the other world being reserved for them. The Holy Qur'ān puts a special emphasis on the fact that the Jews loved physical life much more than did the Arab polytheists. Such an inclination should not have been surprising on the part of the latter, for, after all, they did not believe in the other world, and physical life was the be-all and end-all for them. But the Jews acknowledged the existence of the other world, and even had the illusion that they alone deserved its joys, and yet it was they who, above all others, wished to live in this world as long as possible. This very desire shows how baseless their pretention was, and how they themselves knew that they would have to face the fires of Hell in the other world, and that physical life was, as long as it lasted, a kind of protection against their final fate.

Verse 97 - 98

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيْلَ فَإِنَّهٗ نَزَّلَهٗ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللّٰهِ
مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَّبُشْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ○ مَنْ كَانَ
عَدُوًّا لِّلّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَجِبْرِيْلَ وَمِيْكٰلَ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَدُوٌّ
لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ○

Say, whoever be an enemy to Jibrā'īl (Gabriel) -- it is he who has brought it down upon your heart by the permission of Allah, confirming what has been before it, and a guidance and good tidings to the believers. Whoever be an enemy to Allah, His angels, and His messengers, and to Jibrā'īl and Mikā'īl, surely Allah is enemy to the disbelievers. (Verses 97 - 98)

The perversity of the Jews was very fertile, and gave them ever-new excuses for denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When they learnt that it was Archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel عليه السلام) who brought the Glorious Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they said that the Archangel was their enemy, as it was through him that rigorous commandments or catastrophic punishments had always descended on them, and that for this reason they would not accept a Book which had been revealed through his agency. They also added that they could have accepted the Holy Qur'ān, if the Archangel Mikā'īl (Michael عليه السلام) had brought it down, for he is connected with rain and with divine mercy.

In refuting this argument, the Holy Qur'ān points out that Jibrā'īl عليه السلام is only a messenger, and has, acting only as a messenger, brought down the Holy Qur'ān under a divine command to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. So, why should the Jews be so particular about the messenger, and not look at the Book itself? As for the Book, it confirms the earlier Books of Allah, provides guidance to men, and gives good tidings to the believers. This being what the Divine Books are meant for, the Holy Qur'ān is evidently enough a Divine Book, and must, as such be obeyed. To deny it on account of one's hostility to Jibrā'īl عليه السلام is sheer stupidity or outright perversity. Now, as for the attitude of the Jews towards Jibrā'īl عليه السلام, the Holy Qur'ān declares that to be hostile to the angels (including Jibrā'īl and Mikā'īl عليه السلام) or to the prophets is tantamount to being hostile to Allah Himself. Verse 98 puts down the enemies of angels and prophets as infidels (*Kāfirīn*) in saying that Allah is the enemy of the infidels. In other words, those who deny or oppose the angels and the prophets will have their due punishment in the other world.

Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, in his "Bayān al-Qur'ān", warned against the possibility of very grave error that may arise with regard to the statement in Verse 97 that the Archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel عليه السلام) has "brought down the Book on the heart" of the

Holy Prophet ﷺ . The error would lie in drawing from this phrase the conclusion that Allah has not revealed the words of the Holy Qur'ān but only the meanings. Such a supposition is quite baseless, because many verses of the Holy Qur'ān itself mention the Arabic language as the vehicle of revelation in the case of this particular Book of Allah. That should leave no room for any doubt. Moreover, the "heart" perceives words as much as it does meanings; in fact, the perceiving agent is the "heart", while the ears etc. are only its instruments. Specially, in the state of revelation, the external organs of the senses become dormant, and the heart receives even the words directly without the intervention of the ears. Although we cannot understand the nature of revelation properly, yet, choosing a mundane analogy, one can say that while dreaming in our sleep we do hear words and remember them afterwards, in spite of our external sense of hearing having been suspended while we dreamt. This example should make it easy to see that the revelation of meanings to the heart does in no way preclude the revelation of words as well. Anyhow, it is a sin - and an intellectual dishonesty - to rely on one's own conjectures in defiance of a clear and definite statement in the Holy Qur'ān.

Verse 99

وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ ۚ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَآ اِلَّا الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ○

And certainly We have revealed to you clear signs. And no one denies them except the sinful. (Verse 99)

In denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ , the Jews used to say that no clear evidence or sign of his prophethood had been revealed to him such as they could recognize and accept. In reply to this the Holy Qur'ān says that Allah has revealed a number of very clear signs and evidences of his prophethood which even they know and understand very well. So, their denial is not based on a lack of recognition or knowledge, but on their habitual disobedience, for, as a general rule, no one denies such evidence except those who are wilful and stubborn in their disobedience.

Verse 100

اَوَكُلَّمَا عٰهَدُوْا عَهْدًا نَّبَذَهٗ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۚ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ○

Would it always be that every time they enter into a

pact, a group from among them should throw it aside? In fact, most of them do not believe. (Verse 100)

Allah had, as the Torah itself reports, made the Jews take the pledge that they would have faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he appeared. On being reminded of it, the Jews flatly denied even having taken such a pledge. Commenting on this effrontery, the Holy Qur'ān says that this is not the only instance of such a conduct on their part, for the Jews have, in fact, never fulfilled even those pledges which they acknowledge, and one group or another from among them has always been breaking the compacts they have entered into, specially with regard to religious matters. It can even be said that most of those who have been guilty of such gross violations, did not at all believe in the compacts which they made with Allah. Going against a pledge is only a sin and transgression, but having no faith in the pledge which one gives to Allah is outright infidelity.

The Holy Qur'ān specifically speaks of one group or another breaking the pledge, and not of all the Jews. For there were some among them who did fulfil the pledges, so much so that many Jews finally accepted Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a true prophet, and joined the ranks of the Muslims.

Verse 101

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيْقٌ
مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ ۙ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ كَاَنَّهُمْ لَا
يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

And when came to them a messenger from Allah, confirming what was already with them, some from among the people of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they did not know. (Verse 101)

The previous verse had told us how the breaking of pledges and disobedience had become a regular habit with the Jews. The present verse gives us the latest instance, which is the most relevant to the context.

The Torah had already given the Jews the good tidings of the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When he actually came with all signs which the Torah had indicated, thus confirming the Sacred Book of the

Jews, a large number of them refused to accept him as a prophet. In doing this, they were, in fact, denying the Torah itself, and behaving as if they know nothing of the prophecy, or even the Torah being a Book of Allah. Thus, they were being guilty of infidelity (*Kufr*) even in terms of the Torah itself.

Verses 102 - 103

وَاتَّبَعُوْا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيٰطِيْنُ عَلٰى مُلْكِ سُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ وَمَا كَفَرَ
سُلَيْمٰنُ وَلٰكِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُعَلِّمُوْنَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ ۚ وَمَآ
اُنْزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوْتَ وَ مَارُوْتَ ۭ وَمَا يُعَلِّمٰنِ مِنْ
اَحَدٍ حَتّٰى يَقُوْلَآ اِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ۭ فَيَتَعَلَّمُوْنَ مِنْهُمَا
مَا يُفَرِّقُوْنَ بِهٖ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهٖ ۭ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَآرِّيْنَ بِهٖ مِنْ اَحَدٍ
اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَيَتَعَلَّمُوْنَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۭ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوْا
لَمَنِ اشْتَرٰىهُ مَا لَهٗ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ۭ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهٖٓ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۭ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 0 وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوْبَةٌ مِّنْ
عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ ۭ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 0

And they followed what the devils used to recite in the reign of Sulaymān (Solomon) -- it was not Sulaymān who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels, teaching people magic, and what had been sent down to the two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, in Babylon. And these two did not teach anyone without having said, "We are nothing but a trial, so do not go infidel." Then, they used to learn from them that with which they could separate man from his wife. But they were not to bring harm through it to anyone, without the will of Allah. And they used to learn what harmed them and did no good to them. And they certainly knew that he who buys it has no share in the Hereafter. And, indeed, vile is the thing for which they sold themselves away. Only if they knew! And had they accepted the faith, and been God-fearing, the reward from Allah would have always been far better. Only if they knew! (Verses 102 - 103)

In connection with these two verses, some commentators have reported certain Judaic traditions, which have given rise to a number of doubts, especially in the minds of Muslims with a Western orientation. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has provided very simple and clear solutions to these exegetical problems, and we shall reproduce them here:-

(1) The Jews were impertinent and senseless enough to attribute magic and sorcery to a prophet -- namely, Sayyidnā Sulaymān (Solomon عليه السلام). So, in saying that they used to learn the black arts of the devils (*Shayātīn*), the Holy Qur'ān takes care to deny, as a parenthesis, such a vile allegation against Sayyidna Sulaymān عليه السلام.

(2) These verses condemn the Jews for indulging in black magic. In connection with the verses, some commentators have reported a long and well-known story about a woman called *Zuhrah*, which is not based on any authentic Islamic tradition. Those scholars who have found the story to be infringing the regulations of the Sharī'ah, have rejected it as mere fiction; but those who believe that it can be interpreted so as to come in line with the Sharī'ah, have not dismissed it totally. For the moment we are not concerned with the question whether the story is true or false. But what we would like to insist upon is the fact that a proper understanding does in no way depend on this story.

(3) The Jews knew very well that their indulgence in black magic was not only a sin, but also involved infidelity (*Kufr*). They could also see that such activities would do them no good even in this world, for their sorcery could not harm anyone except when Allah willed it so. Thus their practice went against their knowledge, and they made no use of their understanding to see this discrepancy. That is why the Holy Qur'ān, to begin with, states that they "knew", and then goes on to negate this 'knowledge' by saying, "Only if they knew!" For, if one does neither act upon what one knows nor tries to understand it properly, one's knowledge is no better than ignorance.

(4) There was a time when black magic had grown very popular in the world, particularly in Babylon. Seeing its astonishing efficacy, ignorant people began to confuse its effects with the miracles of prophets, and to suppose that the two were identical in nature. Some

even looked upon magicians as being holy men, and worthy of being obeyed; still others actually started learning and practising black magic as if it were a good deed bearing a divine sanction. [25]

In short, this extraordinary veneration for magic and magicians had become a potent source of misguidance. In order to eradicate this misunderstanding, Allah sent down to Babylon two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, for informing the people as to the true nature of magic and as to its different forms, so that they should distinguish it from the miracles of prophets, and keep away from obeying magicians and practising magic themselves. Just as the prophethood of prophets is divinely confirmed through miracles, signs and rational or other arguments, in the same way the angelical nature of Hārūt and Mārūt was confirmed on the basis of different signs and arguments, so that people should listen attentively to them and follow their guidance.

This particular function was not assigned to the prophets for two reasons. Firstly, the need of the hour was to establish a distinction between the prophets and the magicians, and, the prophets being in a way a party to the dispute, it was proper that a third party should be the arbitrator. Secondly, the necessary distinction between the two could not, in a normal course, be defined without citing and reporting the verbal formulas employed in magic. Merely to report heretical speech is not in itself a heresy - this is a logical and rational principle, and the Sharī'ah too accepts it. So, the prophets could have been allowed to cite these formulas; but, they being a manifestation of divine guidance, Allah did not ask them to perform such a function, and chose two angels for the purpose. For, Allah's commandments are of two kinds -- those pertaining to *Takwīn* (creation and the cosmic order), and those pertaining to *Tashrī'* (legislation) -, and it is quite possible that sometimes the two may not seem to accord with each other. The order of creation is made up of good and evil both, and it is the angels through whom divine commandments are enforced in this sphere. So, the angels are made to do things which, in the perspective

25. Just as there has been a sudden outburst of enthusiasm for the occult sciences in the West since the middle of the sixties in this century, particularly in America where even the universities have been inundated by it.

of the cosmic order, always lead to general good, but which, in so far as they necessarily involve some kind of partial disorder, are seen to be evil -- for example, the growth and upkeep of a human tyrant, or of a harmful beast, each of which is right in the context of the order of creation, but wrong from the point of view of the order of legislation. On the other hand, the prophets are entrusted only with the functions of the legislative order, which are, in their general as well as particular applications, nothing but good.

Although, in view of the ultimate purpose, this reporting of the formulas of magic too was related to the legislative order, yet there was probability -- which even materialized -- that a reporting of such formulas could give an incentive to the practice of black magic. So, Allah preferred not to make the prophets even an indirect means of such reprehensible activities. All the same, the prophets too were made to serve the main purpose by announcing the basic regulations of the Sharī'ah with regard to magic, though not the details pertaining to the minor rules derived from them, for that could have possibly given rise to temptation. We shall explain it through an analogy. The prophets have, for example, told us that it is forbidden to accept a bribe, and have also explained the nature of bribery, but have not given us the details as to how a bribe is given or taken, for a delineation of such minute details would have served only to teach men the different methods of giving or taking a bribe. Or, take an example from different branches of magic. If one utters a certain formula, one would, on getting up from the bed in the morning, find money under his pillow or in his pocket. The Sharī'ah makes it quite clear that such a practice is not, in principle, legitimate, but does not specify what that formula is.

In short, the two angels came down to Babylon, and started the work assigned to them -- that is to say, they used to explain the basic principles of magic, its different forms and the specific formulas, and then used to dissuade the people from getting themselves involved in these activities or with the magicians. Their work was exactly like that of a scholar who, finding that illiterate people sometime fall into uttering heretical words or phrases on account of their ignorance, should collect in his speeches or writings all such phrases that have

gained currency, and inform them as to what they must carefully avoid.

Now, all sorts of people started coming to the angels for seeking information about the nature and the specific formulas of a magic lest ignorance should lead them into error, in the matter of doctrines or that of deeds. In order to provide the correct teaching on this subject and to protect the people from error, the angels were scrupulous enough to make it a point to warn them of possible dangers in giving them the information. They insisted on making it quite clear that in allowing them to provide this kind of information to the people in general, Allah intended to put His servants through a trial, for He would see who uses this knowledge for protecting his *'Īmān* (faith) by recognizing evil and avoiding it, and who falls into misguidance by adopting evil that he has come to recognize as evil -- a choice which can easily lead one into *Kufr* (infidelity) in the matter of deeds or in that of doctrines. The angels repeatedly advised them to seek this dangerous information only with a good intent and to remain steadfast in this good intent, and not to misuse the knowledge so as to earn perpetual damnation.

The angels could not be more honest and forthright. So, they explained the basic principles of magic and even the subsidiary details to all those who were ready to take the pledge to remain steadfast in their faith. Of course, if anyone broke the pledge and fell into transgression or infidelity, it was his own business, and the angels could not be held responsible for it. Some were true to their promise, while many did not fulfil the pledge, and made their knowledge of magic a means of doing harm to people -- this in itself is sin and transgression, while some modes of magic actually involve infidelity (*Kufr*). Thus, through a misuse of their knowledge of magic, some turned into sinners and others into infidels.

Let us repeat that the angels had taught magic for the purpose of reforming the people and helping them to keep to the straight path, but those who misused this teaching did so out of their own perversity. An example would make the situation still more clear. Let us suppose that a man goes to a master of the Islamic sciences, who is an expert in the traditional branches of learning and in philosophy as well, and

who also acts upon his knowledge, and this man requests the master to teach him philosophy, ancient or modern, so that he may protect himself against the doubts raised by the philosophers with regard to Islamic doctrines, and may also be able to give a satisfactory reply to those who raise such doubts. Apprehending that he might turn out to be insincere, and might finally bring the knowledge of philosophy to the aid of false and anti-Islamic ideas, the master warns him against such an eventuality, and the man takes a pledge that he would not misuse his knowledge. Having satisfied himself, the master gives him a thorough training in philosophy. But the man, contrary to his promise, begins to accept the anti-Islamic and false theorizing of philosophers as the truth. Obviously, in such a case, the teacher can in no way be held responsible for the way the pupil behaves. Similarly, there can be no room for doubting the integrity of these two angels.

Although Allah Himself knows how things were, yet one can suppose that once the angels had done the work assigned to them, they must have been recalled to the Heavens. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

What is Magic ? Definition and effects

Since the study of magic has been enjoying a weird currency in the Western countries since 1968, and has sometimes been accepted as a part of academic research, we had better consider the subject at some length from the Islamic point of view. According to the authoritative Arabic dictionary "*Al-Qāmūs*", the word *Siḥr* (Magic) signifies an effect the cause of which is not apparent, whether the cause may actually lie in something which possesses a luminous quality (as the effect of certain phrases), or in things with an extra-sensory reality (as the effect produced by jinns and devils), or in the power of imagination (as the effect of hypnotism), or in things which are sensory yet hidden (as a magnet drawing to itself a piece of iron, when the magnet is concealed from the onlookers; or the effect of drugs, when they have been furtively administered; or the influence of stars and planets). The causes at work being numerous, the forms of magic too are numerous.

Magic and Charms

In everyday language, magic signifies those practices which

involve the co-operation of jinns and devils, or the exercise of the power of imagination, or the use of certain words or phrases. It is a rationally established proposition, accepted by ancient philosophers and by some of the modern ones as well, and equally confirmed by observation and experiment, that words and phrases in themselves possess a certain efficacy, and that when certain letters, words or phrases are recited or written down for a specified number of times, they produce certain specific results. Similar results are obtained by employing human hair or nails or the clothes worn by the person concerned, etc. - a practice which is usually described as the preparation of "Charms". All such things are commonly known as magic.

Siḥr or Magic: The Islamic view

But in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Sihr* (magic) refers to all those usual happenings which have been brought about with the active help of the devils (*Shayāṭīn*), won over through certain practices likely to please them. There are several ways of pleasing the devils. Sometimes one sings the praises of the devils, and sometimes recites formulas of a heretical nature which deny Allah or associate others with Him. The worship of stars and planets too gladdens their heart, as do certain evil deeds - for example, preparing a charm with the blood of a person killed unlawfully, or refusing to adopt the prescribed modes of purifying one's body, or living constantly and deliberately in a state of uncleanliness and impurity. Just as the aid of the angels can be won only through those modes of speech and action which they like (for example, remembrance of Allah, fear of Him and obedience to His commandments, cleanliness and purity, avoidance of all kinds of dirtiness, physical or otherwise, and good deeds in general), similarly the co-operation of the devils can be obtained through those modes of speech and action which are pleasant to them. That is why only those are successful in the practice of black magic who are habitually unclean and impure, avoid required purification and remembrance of Allah, and are given to all kinds of evil deeds - for example, it is usually during the period of menstruation that women become effective in the practice of black magic. So much for black magic or sorcery in the exact sense of the term. As for sleights of hand, mesmerism, hypnotism, or the tricks of

jugglers, they are sometimes described as magic only by an extension of the meaning of the word, or metaphorically. (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

Kinds of Magic

In his "*Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*", Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī says that there are several kinds of magic. Firstly, there are sleights of hand, like those of jugglers, which deceive the eyes of the onlookers, but have no further substance. Then, there are ways of influencing the imagination of others through the concentration of one's own powers of thought so that they begin to see or feel things which do not really exist as happens in mesmerism or hypnotism. Such a result is sometimes obtained with the help of the devils (*Shayātīn*) too. In speaking of the magicians of the Pharaoh, the Holy Qur'ān says: سَحَرُوٓا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ :"They cast a spell on the eyes of the people" (7:116). Or, in another place: يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعٰى : "Through their magic Moses came to think that they (ropes turned into serpents) were running about" (20:66). Obviously, this piece of magic had to do with influencing of the imagination. The second of these verses employs a verb which has the same root as the noun *Khayāl* (thought), and hence clearly states that the ropes and the wands cast down by the magicians had neither turned serpents nor made any movement, but the imagination of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had been affected so as to see them running about in the shape of serpents. The Holy Qur'ān also indicates the other way of influencing men's imaginations which involves the help of the devils (*Shayātīn*):"

هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلٰى مَنْ تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ تَنَزَّلُ عَلٰى كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيْمٍ

Shall I tell you on whom the devils descend? They descend on all those who are slanderers and sinners." (26:222)

Still another kind of magic is that which can change the very nature of a thing - for example, turning a man into a beast or into a stone. Scholars like Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī and Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ deny that magic can totally change the nature of a thing, but confine the efficacy of magic only to influencing the imagination and to deceiving the eyes of the onlookers. This is also what the *Mu'tazilah* thought of the matter. But most of the scholars hold that neither the Sharī'ah nor any rational argument forbids the possibility of

trans-substantiation or the changing of one thing into another, like a living body turning into a stone. As for the well-known principle of the classical philosophers that the change of the "essences" (*Haqā'iq*) is not possible, it concerns the "essences" of the three categories - the Impossible, the Possible and the Necessary --, for, rationally speaking, it just cannot be that something impossible should become possible, or that something possible should become impossible. And as to the Holy Qur'ān putting down the magic of the Egyptian sorcerers as only an impact on the imagination, it does not necessarily mean that all the forms of magic should be no more than an influencing of the imagination. Moreover, certain scholars have seen an argument in favour of the possibility of trans-substantiation through magic in a saying of Ka'b al-Ahbār, reported by Imām Mālik in his Muwatta' on the authority of Qa'qa' ibn Hakīm: "Were it not for these phrases which I recite regularly, the Jews would have changed me into a donkey." "A donkey" is, no doubt, a usual metaphor for "a fool." But it is not proper to turn away, unecessarily, from the literal meaning to a metaphorical one. So, the sentence means just what it says - that if the recitation of the phrases had not protected him, the Jewish sorcerers would have changed him into a donkey. The saying, thus, establishes two things. Firstly, it is possible to change a man into a donkey; secondly, the phrases he used to recite had the property of making the magic of the sorcerers lose its efficacy. On being asked what these phrases were, the scholar Ka'b al-Ahbār taught his listeners the following words of prayer:

اعوذ باللّٰه العظيم الذى ليس بشئ اعظم منه وبكلمات اللّٰه التّامّات التى لايجاوز هن برّ ولا فاجر و باسماء اللّٰه الحسنى كلها ماعلمت منهَا ومالم اعلم من شرّما خلق وبرء وذرء . (اخرجه فى المؤطا باب التعوذ عندالنوم)

"I seek the protection of Allah the Great, greater than whom there is none; and I seek the protection of the perfect words of Allah which no man, virtuous or wicked, can even transcend; and I seek the protection of all the Beautiful Names of Allah, those of them which I know and those which I do not know, from the evil of everything which Allah has created, to which

He has given existence, and which He has spread (over the earth or the universe)."

To sum up, all the three forms of magic are possible, and can manifest themselves in actual fact.

Miracles

Now, let us turn to another important aspect of the question. Through prophets and saints certain events come into manifestation which normally and habitually never happen, and are hence designated as *Kharq al-'Ādah* (contrary to the habitual). The Islamic term for the miracles of prophets is *Mu'jizāt*, and for those of saints, *Karāmat*. The effects produced by such miracles are in appearance sometimes similar to those produced by magic. This external resemblance leads some ignorant people to confuse the one with the other, and they begin to have a reverence for magicians which is totally out of place. So, one must understand the difference between the two clearly.[26]

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26. **Editorial Note on معجزہ :*Mu'jizah* or Miracle**: For all the unusual events and unprecendented happenings the English language has but one word, 'Miracle' which makes it impossible for the reader in that language to mark the subtle difference in various forms of miracles. Briefly, therefore, the different forms of miracles with their distinct objections are explained here. It is hoped that this will help the readers have a clearer conception of *Mu'jizah*.

These terms are used in Arabic language to define and differentiate the unprecendented happenings and here each of them is explained, so as to clearly differentiate them. Qualitatively, there is, apparently no difference in all of them.

Mu'jizah is the unusual event which occurs at the hands of a prophet. It is purely an act of Allah. A prophet's own volition has no part in the working of it. For those who witness a *Mu'jizah* it is compulsory to believe in it.

Karāmah (کَرَامَۃ) -- another mode of unusual happenings -- is also an act of Allah; it appears at the hands of a Man of Allah (وَلِیُّ اللہ). The basic difference in *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah* is that one who performs *Mu'jizah*, addresses himself as a prophet, a Man of Allah has no such claim. In both *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah* the usual cause and effect link is absent. Things happen but without any cause; and there is usually a total transformation of the nature and behaviour of objects in *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah*. What is required is a generalized belief in them. Allah chooses whoever He wills for *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah*. No degree of stringent discipline can give the power to make the unusual happen.

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The Difference between Miracle and Magic

The miracles of prophets and saints are different from magic, firstly, in their respective natures, and, secondly, with regard to the signs and indications attendant upon each. As for the difference in their natures, it lies in the fact that the results produced through magic depend on the law of causality as much as do the ordinary and usual events in the physical world, the only distinction being that the causes are in the latter case quite clear or easily observable, while in the former they are different for a common man to detect. Where the causes are evident, the effects are immediately referred back to them, and the events thus produced are not considered to be astonishing, but where the causes are hidden or obscure, the events produced by them arouse wonder and amazement, and those who are ignorant of the causes readily come to believe that the things have happened in contravention of the habitual laws of the physical universe.[27] What these people do not realize is that such happenings are as much due to certain causes as the habitual events - the cause in the case of extraordinary happenings often being the activity of a jinn or a devil (*Shaytān*). For example, a letter suddenly falls in front of a man, and on reading it he finds that the letter has been written just this day and is coming from a distance of ten thousand miles. Now, the onlookers would call it a "supernatural" event, for they do not know that Allah has given the power of doing such things to jinns and devils. Once one

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Continued

Irhaṣ (ارهاص) is also a kind of *Karāmah*. It heralds the coming of a prophet. It usually occurs at the hands of the one who is closely related to the prophet: the unprecedented happenings in the the life of Mariam, mother of prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام or the various unusual events that began occurring to and around Aminah -- the blessed mother of our Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ; for instance, she had no pangs of birth, towards the close of the birth period she used to hear stranger voices greeting her, although she saw no one. It is compulsory to believe in such events of *Irhaṣ* as have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and believe in a general manner, that *Irhaṣ* is usually associated with the coming of a prophet.

27. In the West, they describe such events as being "supernatural", although the Latin word *Natura*, which is the equivalent of the Greek word *Phusis*, does, at least in its original sense, cover all that has been created, whether it lies in the domain studied by empirical science or beyond it.

comes to understand the means through which things of this nature take place, one would no longer see them as "supernatural", or even as being contrary to "habit". In short, all the results obtained through magical practices are, in fact, due to the operation of physical causes, but in the eyes of common people they acquire the illusory appearance of "supernatural" events, simply because the operative causes are hidden from them.

On the other hand, miracles happen directly under divine command without the intervention of physical causes. For example, the Holy Qur'ān tells us how the tyrant *Namrūd* (Nimrod) threw Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham عليه السلام) into a blazing fire, and how Allah commanded the fire to grow cold for him, but not so cold as to do him harm -- and the fire obeyed the command, and, instead of scorching him, provided a place of safety. This was a direct divine act, and hence a miracle. Now, we sometimes hear of men who, having applied certain chemicals to their body, can enter a fire without being scorched. This is not a miracle, for the operative cause is of a physical nature - that is, the chemicals. These chemicals are not known to people in general, and they are deluded into believing such a performance to be a "supernatural" event going beyond the realm of "the habitual". The Holy Qur'ān itself leaves no doubt as to a miracle being directly an act of Allah Himself. In the Battle of *Badr*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took up a handful of pebbles, and threw them at the army of the infidels, which blinded their eyes. Referring to this miracle, the Holy Qur'ān says: وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ :"When you threw (the pebbles), it was not you who threw, but Allah who threw (them)" (8:17). The statement is explicit enough, and means that the miraculous result produced by a handful of pebbles was not the work of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , but the act of Allah Himself.

Miracle and Magic: How to distinguish between them?

Having explained the difference between the nature of a miracle and that of magic, we must now turn to another important question -- the results produced by each of them being in appearance the same, how is the common man to know the difference between the two? In fact, Allah has given to each certain characteristic features which can help the common man to distinguish miracles from magic. Firstly,

miracles are manifested through those whom everyone knows to be clean in body, pure in deeds and God-fearing. On the contrary, magic shows its effectiveness through those who are unclean in body, dirty in deeds, shunning the worship of Allah and His remembrance. This is a distinction which everyone can observe with his own eyes. Secondly, Allah has so ordained things that if a man pretends to be a prophet and claims to perform miracles, and yet tries to practise magic, his magic is never effective, but he can be effective in magic so long as he does not lay a claim to prophethood.

Magic and Prophets

As to the question whether magic can have an effect on prophets, we shall say that it can. As we have explained above, magic operates through physical causes, and prophets are not immune to the influence of physical causes. Just as they feel the effects of hunger and thirst, fall ill and get healed through the operation of apparent physical causes, in the same way they can be affected by the hidden operations of magic, which are no less physical. Let us add that being affected by magic does in no way go against the dignity of the station of prophethood -- no more than would thirst or hunger. Authentic *aḥādith* report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was affected by the magic spell cast by the Jews, that he came to know of it through revelation, and that he took certain measures to free himself of its effects. The Holy Qur'ān too tells us how Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) experienced the effects of magic when the sorcerers cast a spell on his eyes, and the ropes and the sticks thrown by them began to look like running serpents, so that he was really frightened (20:66,67).

Injunctions of the Sharī'ah with regard to Magic

As we have already said, *Sihr* (magic), in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, refers only to those practices in which one seeks the help of jinns and devils (*Shayāṭin*) by gaining their pleasure through the adoption of certain phrases or actions that involve infidelity (*Kufr*) and association (*Shirk*) or sin and transgression, and thus brings about certain extraordinary and unusual events. The magic of Babylon, mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, was just this, and it is this form of magic which it condemns as infidelity or *Kufr* (Jaṣṣāṣ). According to Abu Mansur, the most valid and correct view in this respect is that each and every form of magic does

not, unconditionally and absolutely, constitute infidelity, but only that form which employs actions or speech contrary to the tenets of faith (*'Īmān*). (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

As everyone knows, the Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadīth* repeatedly enjoin upon the Muslims to consider the *Shayāṭin* as one's enemies, to hate them and to curse them. Seeking to please them and to win their friendship, in contravention of such clear commandments, is in itself a sin. Moreover, they are pleased only when one indulges in *Kufr* (infidelity) or *Shirk* (association), and thus forfeits one's faith (*'Īmān*) altogether, or at least in disobedience and transgression, displeasing Allah and His angels by wallowing in dirt and impurity -- which becomes an additional sin. And if one makes use of magic for doing some harm to a human being unlawfully, it is still one more sin.

Thus, what the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* call *Sihr* can never be free either of infidelity in the matter of faith, or at least of infidelity in the matter of actions. If, in order to please the *Shayāṭin*, one adopts actions or speech involving infidelity or association, one would be committing an act of real infidelity in the matter of faith; and even if one manages to avoid infidelity and association in speech or action, but indulges in other sinful activities, one would not remain free from infidelity in the matter of actions. This is what the Holy Qur'ān means when, in the present verses, it designates magic as *Kufr*.

To sum up, when magic employs actions or speech involving infidelity (such as seeking the help of *Shayāṭin*, or believing the stars and the planets to be effective in themselves, or claiming prophethood by presenting the results of magical procedures as miracles, etc), such a magic, according to the consensus, constitutes infidelity; and when magic does not involve acts of infidelity but only the commission of sinful acts, such a magic is a major sin.

Now, let us add some subsidiary injunctions with regard to magic.

(1) Since magic is not usually free from infidelity in the matter of faith or in that of action, it necessarily follows that it is forbidden to learn or teach or practice it. Some jurists, however, allow one to learn magic for the purpose of protecting Muslims from harm, but one must not try to learn more than is necessary.

(2) If in preparing charms and amulets the help of Jinns and *Shayāṭin* has been sought, they too come under the category of *Sihr*, and are thus forbidden. If the words employed in the charms are vague, and one does not exactly know what they mean but suspects that they are invocations addressed to idols or *Shayāṭin*, even such charms are forbidden.

(3) As for the other forms of magic beside the *Sihr*, like that of Babylon, condemned by the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, if they involve *Kufr* and *Shirk* in some way, they too are forbidden.

(4) If there is a form of magic which employs words or actions or other elements to which the Sharī'ah does not object, then it is permissible on condition that it is not used for a purpose which the *Sharī'ah* forbids.

(5) It is permissible to use the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, or the Divine Names or the words of the *Ḥadīth* in preparing charms and amulets, or as a recitation or invocation for gaining divine help in order to attain a desired end. But if such a use of the sacred texts or words is made for a reprehensible purpose, like doing harm to someone without an excuse, even that is forbidden. (Shamī, Fatāwā Qadī Khān)

A doctrinal point

Verse 102 says: "They could not thus do any harm to anyone, except with the permission of Allah". This shows that causes in themselves and by themselves cannot produce the effects one usually associates with them, and it is Allah who creates the effects as much as the causes. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 104

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقُوْلُوْا رَاعِنَا وَقُوْلُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوْا ط

وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ○

O those who believe, do not say "*Rā'inā*", but say "*Unẓurnā*", and listen. And for the unbelievers there is a grievous punishment. (Verse 104)

Among other perversities, some of the Jews invented a new mischief. When they presented themselves before the Holy Prophet

ﷺ, they would address him with the word *Rā'inā*, which, in Arabic, means "be mindful of us", but is, in Hebrew, a curse. The latter is what they intended, but the Arabs, not knowing Hebrew, could not see the point, and some Muslims too, with the Arabic sense of the word in mind, began to address the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the same manner to the great glee of the Jews who had thus found a way of insulting him openly, and had even tricked the Muslims into joining them. In order to frustrate the design of the Jews, the Holy Qur'an commands the Muslims to use the word *Unẓurnā* instead of *Rā'inā*, for the meanings of the two words are the same in Arabic. The verse also announces a dire punishment to the Jews for showing disrespect to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for trying to be clever with him.

The verse describes the insolent Jews as *K¯firīn* (infidels), which means that being intentionally disrespectful t rds a prophet even in an indirect manner constitutes infidelity.

The verse shows that if a perfectly legitimate action on one's part provides room for others to commit illegitimate actions, even the legitimate action no longer remains lawful for one. For example, if a permissible action on the part of a scholar is likely to lead the ignorant into error and to induce them to do impermissible things, that permissible action will then become forbidden for him, provided that the action concerned is not essential according to the Sharī'ah and is not included among its objects. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadith* provide many instances of this nature. For example, before the advent of Islam the Quraysh had, in rebuilding the Ka'bah, made certain modifications in the design set by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham عليه السلام). A *ḥadīth* reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished to demolish the present structure, and to build it again according to the Abrahamic pattern, but he did not do so, for such an action could have led ignorant people into misunderstanding and error.

In the vocabulary of the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, such injunctions are described as سدّ الذرائع : *Sadd al-Dharā'i:* "removing the means (to error)" and are accepted by all the jurists -- those of the Hanbali school being very particular about them. (Qurṭubī)

Verse 105

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُّنَزَّلَ

عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۗ
وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ٥

Those who disbelieve from among the people of the Book, or idolaters, do not like that any good should come to you from your Lord. But Allah chooses for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty. (Verse 105)

The previous verse told us how the Jews behaved towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ ; the present verse speaks of their behaviour towards Muslims in general. Some of the Jews used to assure the Muslims of their sincerity towards them, and to pretend that they would very much have liked the Muslims to have received from Allah religious doctrines and commandments superior to what they themselves had received, so that they too could accept them, but unfortunately Islam did not seem to be a better religion. The Holy Qur'ān refutes their claim to be the well-wishers of the Muslims, and declares that the infidels, whether they be the Jews or the associators, are so jealous of Muslims that they can never like the idea of their receiving from Allah any kind of blessing whatsoever. Of course, this jealousy can do no harm to the Muslims, for Allah is Beneficent and All-Powerful, and can shower his special blessings on whomsoever He chooses.

These Jews used to make two claims -- firstly, that Judaism was a better religion than Islam; secondly, that they were the well-wishers of the Muslims. They could not establish the first of these claims on the basis of any valid argument, and it remained an empty assertion. Moreover, the difference between Islam and Judaism does not primarily depend on the question of one being better than the other. For, when something new comes to abrogate something older, the latter is automatically given up -- and Allah has sent Islam to abrogate all the earlier religions. The fact being so obvious, the Holy Qur'ān says nothing in refutation of the first claim, and takes up only the second. The *mushrikīn* (associators) have been mentioned here along with the Jews for the sake of emphasis, and to point out that Jews cannot be the well-wishers of Muslims any more than *mushrikīn* can -- the two being alike in their hatred of Muslims.

Verses 106 - 107

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ اَوْ نُنْسِهَا نَاْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَآ اَوْ مِثْلِهَا ؕ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ
اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ O اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ O

Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one equal to it. Do you not know that Allah is powerful over everything? Do you not know that to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? And, you have none, other than Allah, to protect or help you. (Verses 106 - 107)

At first, Muslims used to pray with their faces turned towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* at Jerusalem; later on, Allah commanded them to turn towards the Ka'bah. Similarly, certain other injunctions were abrogated altogether, or replaced by others. This provided the Jews and some of the associators too with an occasion to taunt the Muslims, and to say that such changes were made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and not by Allah. Their purpose was to sow the seed of doubt in the mind of the Muslims with regard to the Holy Qur'ān being a book revealed by Allah. They used to argue that if everything that Allah revealed was good, as the Muslims affirmed, why should one injunction be replaced by another? For, it would only mean that one of the two injunctions must be good, and the other evil, but no divine revelation can possibly be evil. Putting these two premises together, the Jews tried to draw the conclusion that the Holy Qur'ān could not be a revealed book.

The present verse refutes this line of argument, and, in effect, points out that abrogation does not mean replacing good with evil, or vice versa, which should imply the possibility of the presence of evil in divine revelation, but that everything that Allah reveals to His prophets is good, and that what has been abrogated is good as much as what abrogated it.

The verse declares that if Allah chooses to abrogate an injunction contained in a certain verse, while retaining the verse itself as a part of the Holy Qur'ān, or chooses to remove a verse from the memories of

men altogether, there is nothing objectionable in it, for Allah alone knows the wisdom that lies in His choice, and He makes these changes for the good of men. In fact, He always sends another verse or injunction better than, or at least equal to, what He has abrogated. Allah being omnipotent and omniscient, He possesses the authority to change His commandments as He likes, and He also knows what is good for men at a particular time, and makes these changes according to this knowledge. Men have no friend or helper except Allah. As friend, Allah keeps their good in view while laying down injunctions. As helper, He protects those who obey His commandments against the hostility of their foes - but if the obedient are to receive blessings in the other world greater than the harm they have to suffer in this world, the apparent domination of their foes does not really matter.

What is *Naskh*? (Abrogation)

Verse 106 speaks of Allah abrogating certain verses, or making men forget certain others. The first phrase of the verse, thus covers all the possible forms in which a verse of the Qur'ān can be abrogated. The Arabic word in the text is *Naskh*, which has two lexical meanings -- (1) to write, and (2) to abolish, to repeal. According to the consensus of all the commentators, the word has been employed in this verse in the second sense -- that is, the repeal or abrogation of an injunction. So, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Naskh* (نسخ) signifies the promulgation of an injunction in place of another -- whether the later injunction merely consists in the repeal of the earlier or, substitutes a new regulation in its place. The other form of *Naskh* mentioned in this verse is that sometimes Allah made the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions forget a certain verse altogether. The commentators have cited several instances of this kind of *Naskh*, and the purpose in such cases has usually been to repeal a certain regulation.

The kinds of abrogation

Making laws and repealing them to promulgate new ones in their stead is a regular and well-known practice in human governments and institutions. But in the case of man-made laws abrogation takes place sometimes because the law-makers do not understand the situation properly while making a certain law, and have to change it when they

realize their mistakes, and sometimes because when a law is promulgated, it is in accord with the prevailing situation, but when quite unforeseen changes alter the situation, the law too has to be changed. But these two forms of abrogation are out of the question in the case of divine injunctions.

There is, however, a third form too. The lawmaker makes a law, knowing fully well that the circumstances are going to change in such a way that the law will no longer be suitable for the new situation; so, when the situation changes as he already knew, he changes the law too, and promulgates a new one which he had thought of at the very start. For example, a physician prescribes a medicine for a patient in view of his present conditions, but he knows that when the patient has been using it for two days, his condition will change and require a new medicine -- with this realization, he prescribes a medicine suitable for that day, but two days later, when circumstances have changed, he prescribes a new one. The physician can easily give the patient written instructions for the whole course of the treatment, with all the changes in the medicines duly indicated. But this would be putting too much burden on the already feeble patient, and there would also be the danger of some harm through a possible error or misunderstanding.

This is the only form of abrogation which can occur, and has been occurring in divine injunctions and in divine books. Every new Shari'ah and every new revealed Book has been abrogating many injunctions of the earlier Sharī'ah and of the earlier Book. Similarly, within the same Shari'ah, too, it has always happened that a certain law was in force for a time, but Divine Wisdom chose to abrogate it and to promulgate another in its place. A *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim says: لم تكن نبوة قط الا تناسخت : "There has never been a prophethood which did not abrogate some injunctions." This is a principle which it should not be difficult to understand. It was only some malicious and ignorant Jews who confused the divine abrogation of injunctions with the two forms of the repeal of man-made laws, and began, in their impudence, to taunt the Holy Prophet ﷺ - in reply to which, as we have said, these two verses were revealed. (Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kaṯhīr etc.)

As for the Muslims, it was probably in their desire to avoid giving occasion to the enemies of Islam for such taunts that some from among

the *Mu'tazilah* tried to explain away the whole question of *Naskh*. Logically speaking, there is a possibility -- so ran their argument -- of abrogation in the case of divine injunctions, and the possibility cannot be denied on any rational ground, but abrogation has not actually occurred in the Holy Qur'ān, and there is no verse in the Holy Book which abrogates another (*Nāsikh*) and no verse which has been abrogated (*Mansūkh*). This view is attributed to Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī, but the *'Ulama'* in general have always rejected this opinion, and refuted the argument. Thus, we read in "Rūh al-Ma'ānī":

واتفقت اهل الشرائع على جواز النسخ و وقوعه وخالفت اليهود غيرالعيسوية فى جوازه وقالوا: يمتنع عقلاً وأبو مسلم الاصفهانى فى وقوعه فقال: إنه و إن جاز عقلا لكنه لم يقع

"The people belonging to all the Sharī'ahs are unanimous in accepting the validity of abrogation and its actual occurrence both. Only the Jews -- with the exception of their 'Isawiyyah sect have denied the possibility of abrogation, and Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī has denied its occurrence, for he says that it is rationally possible, but has not actually taken place."

Imām al-Qurṭubī says:

معرفة هذا الباب أكيدة و فائدته عظيمة لاتستغنى عن معرفته العلماء ولاينكره الاّ الجهلة الاغبياء

"It is essential to understand the question of abrogation, and great benefits flow from such an understanding, which no scholar can dispense with, and no one can deny abrogation except the ignorant and the dull-headed."

In this connection, al-Qurṭubī has related a very illuminating incident. The fourth *Khalīfah* Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه saw a man preaching in the mosque. He asked the people what the man was doing. On being told that he was preaching, the blessed *Khalīfah* said: "He is not doing anything of the sort, but only announcing to the people that he is such and such a man and the son of such and such, and asking them to recognize and remember him." Calling the man to his side, he asked: "Do you know the injunctions which have been abrogated and those which have abrogated the earlier ones?" When he confessed that he did not, the *Khalīfah* turned him out of the mosque, and ordered him never to preach there.

It is not feasible to cite here all the sayings of the blessed Companions and their immediate Successors (*Tābi'īn*) which affirm the actual occurrence of abrogation in the case of injunctions laid down by the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. Some of these have been quoted, along with the evidence for the authenticity of the reports, in the commentaries of Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kaṭhīr etc. and in "Al-Durr al-Manthur". As for the reports less strongly authenticated, they are just innumerable. That is why there has always been a total consensus of the *'Ulamā'* on the question of *Naskh*, except for Abu Muslim al-Isfahānī and a few others from among the *Mu'tazilah* who have denied the actual occurrence of abrogation -- but Imām Rāzī has, in his commentary, exposed in detail the hollowness of their opinion.

The terminology of the *Naskh*

It is also essential to keep in mind a certain distinction in the use of the word *Naskh* as a technical term of the Sharī'ah. The technical sense of the word implies changing an injunction, and replacing one injunction by another. Now, this change may consist in repealing an injunction altogether and replacing it by another (for example, fixing the Ka'bah as the Qiblah -- the direction towards which Muslims turn in their prayers -- instead of the *Baytul-Maqdis*); the change may equally consist in retaining an injunction but adding certain condition and provisions to it. The *'Ulama'* of the early period of Islam have used the word *Naskh* in this general and comprehensive sense which includes the total repeal of an injunction as well as a partial change in an injunction with the addition of certain conditions, provisions or exceptions. That is why the *'Ulamā'* of the earlier period have indicated some five hundred verses of the Holy Qur'ān which, according to them, have been abrogated.

But, according to the *'Ulamā'* of a later period, only that change is to be called a *Naskh* which cannot in any way be brought into consonance with an earlier injunction. Obviously, this approach greatly reduces the number of abrogated verses. For example, there are, according to al-Suyūṭi, only twenty such verses. Later on, Shāḥ Waliyyullah, seeking to bring the abrogated injunctions in consonance with the earlier injunctions, reduced the number of abrogated verses to only five -- these being the cases where later injunctions could not

be made to correspond with the earlier ones without far-fetched interpretations. This effort is highly commendable, because the basic postulate behind an injunction is its permanence, while abrogation goes against this postulate, and hence it is not proper to posit abrogation in a verse laying down an injunction which can, in some justifiable manner, be shown to be still valid.

But this effort to reduce the number of abrogated verses does not, and cannot in the least imply [28] that the presence of abrogation is in any way -- may Allah forgive us for reproducing a blasphemy -- a shortcoming or defect in the Holy Qur'ān or Islām, that the *'Ulamā'* have for the last fourteen hundred years been trying to remove it, that the ultimate inspiration came to Shāh Walīyyullāh whose extraordinary achievement lies in having reduced the number of abrogated verses to five, and that now one may wait for a few geniuses who would bring the number down to zero.

To adopt such an approach towards the question of "*Naskh*" is no service to Islam or to the Holy Qur'ān,[29] nor can it obliterate the profound investigations into truth of the matter made by the blessed Companions, their Successors, and the *'Ulamā'* of the generations that followed them during the last fourteen hundred years, nor can it stop the recriminations of the enemies of Islam. In fact, all it would do is to furnish a weapon to the present-day traducers of Islam and those who wish to rebel against Islam, who would now be saying that what the *'Ulamā'* of the Islamic *Ummah* have been maintaining on the subject for the last fourteen hundred years has finally proved to be wrong. May Allah forbid such a thing! If this door is opened, it would let in all kinds of disorders, and all the injunctions of the Sharī'ah would come under suspicion. Then, is there any guarantee that the results of this "modernistic" research would not turn out to be wrong tomorrow!

We have come across certain recent writings in which an attempt has been made to revive the argument of Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī.

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28. As the 'modernists' have been all too impatient to believe.

29. To which pretends the whole tribe of self-styled scholars, researchers, "experts in Islamic studies" and "revivificateurs of Islam."

Such writers begin with the assumption that the Arabic word *Mā* in verse 106 is not a relative or adverbial pronoun signifying "whenever", or "whichever" but a conjunction implying "if" that introduces a conditional clause; so, they translate the first phrase of the the verse not as "whichever verse We abrogate", but as "if We abrogate a verse", and say that the statement pertains to a supposition or to an imaginary situation as do the phrases beginning with the Arabic word *Law* (لو : if) -- for example: لَوْكَانَ فِيهِمَا اٰلِهَةٌ : "If there were in the sky and the earth another god beside Allah" (21:22) or اِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدٌ: "If the All-Merciful had a son" (43:81). On this basis, they argue that abrogation is possible, but has never actually occurred. Such writers, we are afraid, do not show an intimate knowledge of Arabic grammar, for there is a great deal of difference between a condition suggested by the word *Mā* and the imaginary situation introduced by the conjunction *Law*. Moreover, it is on the basis of this verse itself that the blessed Companions have affirmed the occurrence of abrogation, and have even cited many instances. So have their Successors and all authentic Commentators. In view of such unanimity, the new-fangled interpretation cannot be acceptable. Even Shāh Waliyyullāh, in reducing the number of abrogated verses, has never thought of denying the fact of abrogation. In short, all the authentic and authoritative *'Ulamā'*, from the days of the blessed Companions down to our own day, have always affirmed not only the possibility, but also the actual occurrence of abrogation. This has been the position of all the *'Ulamā'* of Deoband too, without any exception.

The injunctions with regard to abrogation are too many and too intricate to be discussed here -- they properly belong to the books on the Principles of Jurisprudence.

Verse 108

اَمْ تُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَسْـَٔلُوْا رَسُوْلَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ ۝

Or, do you rather want to ask your Prophet as Mūsā was asked earlier? And whoever takes to infidelity in exchanges of faith has certainly missed the straight path. (Verse 108)

Hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ had become so habitual to the Jews that they were always making insolent demands. Once they asked him to bring before them whole of the Qur'an all at once just as the Torah had been revealed. In reprimanding them for making such improper demands on the prophets of their time, the verse reminds them how their forefathers too had done the same -- for example, they had asked Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) to help them to see Allah openly with their physical eyes. In such cases, the intention of the Jews had never been to seek guidance or to satisfy their doubts or to strengthen their faith, but only to cast aspersions on a prophet, or to question the wisdom of Allah. The verse indicts this behavior as *Kufr* (infidelity). Such demands are improper, because there is a *raison d'etre* for everything Allah does, but divine wisdom alone knows what that is, and the creature has no right to determine the precise mode of his Creator's acts -- he should not even ask the why and wherefore of a divine action, but accept it and submit himself to the Divine Will.

If one takes this verse as having been addressed to the Muslims, it would mean that they are being warned against making improper demands on the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Verses 109 - 110

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَوْ يَرُدُّوْنَكُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا ج
حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِم مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْفُوْا
وَاصْفَحُوْا حَتّٰى يَأْتِيَ اللّٰهُ بِأَمْرِهٖ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيْرٌ ○ وَأَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوْا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ
مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوْهُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ○

Many among the people of the Book desire to turn you, after your accepting the faith, back into disbelievers -- all out of envy generating from their hearts, even after the truth has become clear to them. So, forgive and overlook till Allah brings out His command. Certainly, Allah is powerful over everything. And be steadfast in *Salāh*, and give *Zakāh*. And whatever good you send

forth for yourselves, you will find it with Allah. Certainly, Allah is watchful of what you do. (Verses 109 - 110)

Some of the Jews, pretending to be the well-wishers of the Muslims, were always inventing new stratagems to make them turn away from Islam, and, in spite of repeated failure in this effort, did not refrain from it. The verse warns the Muslims against their intentions, which are motivated, not by sincerity and friendship, but by envy -- which in its turn arises not from anything the Muslims do, but spontaneously from within themselves even after they have come to understand clearly what the truth is. The verse also asks the Muslims not to give way to their justifiable anger at such misconduct, but to forgive the Jews, and wait till Allah sends a new commandment with regard to such matters. Thus, the verse gives an indication that Allah is soon going to lay down a law for the preservation of peace and order on the earth which would guide the Muslims in dealing with mischief-makers -- the law, of course, being the permission to go to war against the enemies of Islam. The Muslims were actually conscious of their own weakness and the strength of their foe, and could have wondered how they would be able to act upon the new law. So, the verse reminds them that Allah's power extends over everything, small or big, ordinary or extraordinary.

The next verse asks the Muslims to continue offering their prayers and paying *Zakāh* and when the new law comes down, they can add the participation in a *Jihād* to these good deeds which they have already been performing. Nor should the Muslims suppose that until they can take part in a *Jihād*, mere prayers and fasting will not bring them the spiritual merit they desire; in fact, they shall receive a full reward in the other world for each and every good deed they perform, for Allah knows what people do, and not a particle of one's good deeds shall be lost.

This command to show forbearance towards the Jews was proper to the situations of the Muslims at that time. Later on, Allah fulfilled the promise made in verse 109, and sent down the injunction with regard to *Jihād*. Then, this new law was applied to the Jews as well as to other miscreants - in order to prevent disorder and to make peace

and order prevail on the earth, Muslims went to war against them, and the mischief-makers were either killed, or forced into exile, or made to pay *Jizyah.*[30]

Verses 111 - 113

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ يَّدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ اِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُوْدًا اَوْ نَصٰرٰى ؕ تِلْكَ
اَمَانِيُّهُمْ ؕ قُلْ هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۝ بَلٰى مَنْ
اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهٗۤ اَجْرُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ وَلَا خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۝ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصٰرٰى عَلٰى
شَيْءٍ وَّقَالَتِ النَّصٰرٰى لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّهُمْ يَتْلُوْنَ
الْكِتٰبَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ
بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ۝

And they say that no one shall ever enter Paradise unless he is a Jew, or a Christian. These are their fancies. Say, "Bring your proof, if you are truthful." Of course, whosoever submits his self to Allah and is good in deeds has his reward with his Lord, and there shall be no fear for such men, nor shall they grieve. And the Jews say: "The Christians stand on nothing" and the Christians say, "The Jews stand on nothing" -- and they both read the Book! Similarly, those who do not know say as they (the Jews and the Christians) do. So Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they used to dispute. (Verses 111 - 113)

The Jews and the Christians were hostile not only to the Muslims, but also to each other. They had forgotten the essence of religion -- that is, adherence to the true and authentic doctrines, and performance of good deeds as laid down by the Sharī'ah -- and had identified it with a mere affiliation to a racial or social community. Each of the two groups claimed that it had the exclusive right to go to

30. Which is a special levy on non-Muslims who live under the protection of the Islamic state and which absolves them from military service.

the Paradise, without having any argument to substantiate the claim. The Jews read the Torah, while the Christians read the Evangel, and they could have easily seen that the two Books confirm each other. Each party used to assert, in its malice, that the religion of the other was baseless. This gave an excuse to the *mushrikīn* (associators) who, in spite of their ignorance, began to say the same of both the religions.

The Holy Qur'ān dismisses these pretensions as mere fancy and self-delusion. It declares that other people too will go to Paradise who have, in their time, been following the Sharī'ah of their own prophet, and who, now that the Holy Qur'ān also has abrogated all the earlier Divine Books, follow the Islamic Sharī'ah. Verse 112 lays down the general principle in this respect, which is accepted by the followers of all the Divine Books. The essence of religion, whether it be Islam or Christianity or Judaism, lies in two things. (1) One should obey Allah in one's belief as well as in one's actions. (2) This obedience should not arise from expediency, but one should surrender oneself to divine commandments in all sincerity. Moreover, it is not enough to be worthy of Paradise merely to have a sincere intention to obey Allah, and then to invent, according to one's own fancy, the modes and forms of obedience, for it is absolutely essential that the forms of worship and the modes of obedience should be no other than those which Allah Himself has appointed through the agency of His prophets -- it goes without saying that since the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān this can only mean accepting and following the Islamic Sharī'ah. We may add that in connection with the first of these two principles, the Holy Qur'ān employs the Arabic word أَسْلَمَ : *Aslama* which signifies total submission to Allah, and in connection with the second word *Muhsin*, which signifies وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ : "one who performs good deeds" according to the Sharī'ah.

The differences between the Jews and the Christians

In so far as these verses deal with the claims of the Jews and the Christians, the point of the argument is this:- Having laid down the two principles the acceptance of which makes one worthy of Paradise, the Holy Qur'ān suggests that they should now try to find out who is really acting upon them. Obviously, one who keeps following an in-

junction even after it has been abrogated cannot be described as obedient, and hence the Jews and the Christians no longer deserve this title. After the abrogation of an injunction, obedience consists in acting upon the new injunction which has replaced the earlier one. This condition is now being fulfilled only by the Muslims who have accepted the latest and the last Prophet ﷺ and his Sharī‘ah. Hence, they alone shall now be considered worthy of Paradise. The condition of one's being sincere in one's obedience excludes the hypocrites too, for the Sharī‘ah counts them among the infidels, and thus assigns them to Hell.

Verse 112 also announces the reward of those who act upon these principles -- on the Day of Judgment, they shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve, as angels will give them good tidings. As for the debates among the Jews, the Christians and the associators, Verse 113 declares that Allah will Himself decide the question finally on the Day of Judgment. In fact, the question has already been settled on the basis of what Allah has revealed in His Books as well as on the basis of rational argument; the final decision on the Day of Judgment will be of the visible kind -- those who follow the Truth will be sent to Paradise, while those who go after falsehood will be cast down in Hell.

These verses provide a warning to the Muslims as well, lest they too should delude themselves like the Jews and the Christians, and suppose that merely because they belong to the social community of Muslims and can, as such, claim to be Muslims, whereby they can dispense with the need to obey Allah and to follow the Sharī‘ah, and yet receive the rewards Allah has promised to give to true Muslims. Even Muslims have no right to hope for these rewards until and unless they submit themselves totally, in thought and deed both, to the commandments of Allah and His Prophet ﷺ .

Verses 114 - 115

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَّنَعَ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ أَنْ يُّذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهٗ وَ
سَعٰى فِي خَرَابِهَا ۭ أُولٰٓئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَّدْخُلُوهَآ إِلَّا خَآئِفِينَ ۭ
لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ○ وَلِلّٰهِ

الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّٰهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

And who is more cruel than the one who prevents the mosques of Allah from His name being recited therein, and strives for their destruction? It was not for such men to enter them except in awe. For them there is disgrace in this world, and for them, in the other world, there is a mighty punishment. To Allah belongs the East and the West. So, whichever way you turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Embracing, all-Knowing. (Verses 114 - 115)

In order to understand these two verses, one should keep in mind three different incidents connected with the three groups hostile to Islam, all of which were, in one way or another, guilty of preventing people from worshipping Allah in mosques and of laying them waste.

(1) When Allah changed the Qiblah -- that is to say, commanded the Muslims to turn towards the Ka'bah in their *Salāh*, and not towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* --, the Jews raised all kinds of objections to it, and tried to produce in the minds of the Muslims doubts and misgiving which, had they taken root, would have led to the denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to the giving up of prescribed *Salāh*, thus laying waste the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

(2) The Romans had once invaded Jerusalem, and the ignorant among them had polluted the *Baytul-Maqdis*, which naturally prevented people from performing *Salāh* in this mosque. The Christians in a way looked upon the Romans as their ancestors; moreover, the humiliation of the Jews was in itself pleasing to them. Thus, in refusing to condemn this misdeed of the Romans, the Christians too were being indirectly responsible for laying waste the mosque.

(3) At the time of the peace of *Hudaybiyyah*, the *mushrikīn* (associators) did not allow the Holy Prophet ﷺ to enter Makkah and to perform the Hajj. So, this group too was guilty of the same sin.

According to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Verse 114 refers to the second of these three incidents -- the commentator

Ibn Jarīr too accepts this view. But the commentator Ibn Kathīr follows Ibn Zayd in preferring the third as being the occasion on which this verse was revealed. The Holy Qur'ān, however, speaks in general terms of "the mosques of Allah" so as to lay down a regular and permanent law, for all the peoples, covering all the possible cases of desecrating mosques and of hindering the "remembrance" (ذکر) of Allah in any way and thus laying them waste -- it denounces those who are capable of such a misdeed as being "unjust" or "cruel", and threatens them with humiliation in this world and dire punishment in the other, for the dignity of a mosque requires that one should enter it in a spirit of lowliness and respect, and with the fear of Allah in one's heart.

The prediction of the Holy Qur'ān came true. The groups which had been trying to lay waste the mosques were soon humiliated, and came under the Muslim rule. They are, of course, to meet a dire punishment in the other world for being disbelievers, but the punishment will be all the more severe on account of this additional sin.

The earlier verses have told us how each of these groups claimed to be on the right path. The present verse, in referring to their desecration of mosques, refutes this claim as being a shameless pretension on the part of those whose behaviour itself gives them the lie.

As for Verse 115, let us recall that the idolaters compelled the Holy Prophet ﷺ to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah, and thus separated him from the Ka'bah (the incident is, of course, known as the *Hijrah*). For some sixteen or seventeen months after that, the Muslims had to, under the commandment of Allah, turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* (at Jerusalem) while offering *Salāh*. But the Holy Prophet ﷺ felt a deep longing for turning towards the Ka'bah, and from time to time he would look upwards, waiting for the Archangel Jibrā'īl to come with a new commandment in this respect. Finally, such a commandment did come, and Allah changed the orientation (Qiblah). Speaking of this modification, the Holy Qur'ān says:

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى السَّمَآءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ
شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ

We do see how you raise your face again and again towards

> the sky. So, We are going to give you the orientation which you desire. Therefore, turn your face towards the Holy Mosque at Makkah, and all of you too, wheresoever you may be, turn towards it." (2:144)

This new commandment naturally made the Muslims very happy, but the Jews, in their habitual malice, made it an occasion for taunting them and accusing them of going against the way of the earlier prophets.

Thus, there are two facets to Verse 115. On the one hand, it is an answer to the objection raised by the Jews; on the other hand, it brings comfort to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to the blessed Companions. The verse points out that had Allah been limited to any one direction, a fixed and permanent orientation would have been necessary for worshipping Him, but that, being infinite and beyond all possible limitations and qualifications, He is the Lord of the East and the West and of all conceivable directions -- He is everywhere, and surrounds everything. Wheresoever a man turns, he shall find Allah "facing" him -- that is to say, ready to accept his prayers and to shower His bounties on him. Consequently, neither does the *Baitul-Maqdis* nor the Ka'bah enjoy an inherent or inalienable superiority; either of them can acquire a position of privilege only through divine ordination. All that matters is to obey the commandment of Allah, which alone can make one worthy of receiving His grace. In order to win His pleasure, one has to orient oneself according to what He Himself has determined. If, in spite of being infinite and free from all limitations, Allah has yet fixed a particular orientation, it is because He is Omniscient, and knows what is the best in a certain situation and for a certain people.

Although it is not possible for man to comprehend fully the wisdom which is inherently present in each and every divine commandment, yet the fixing of a definite orientation for *Salāh* has a very obvious *raison d'etre*. Whichever way one turns, one would, no doubt, find Allah "facing" him; but if one has to choose a direction every time one starts to pray, it would only mean a dispersion of one's attention. And when several men are offering their prayers jointly it would really be odd if each one of them adopts a different orientation. So, a fixed orientation for all helps the individual and the groups both in

acquiring the necessary concentration of mind and the sense of a joint purpose.

This explanation satisfactorily dispels the objection often raised by certain antagonists who accuse the Muslims of being "the worshippers of the Ka'bah." If, by way of self-justification, they should still assert that they too keep the idols in front of them while meditating or worshipping for the same purpose of attaining a state of concentration, the claim does in no way reinforce their accusation against the Muslims. Moreover, an impartial investigation into the respective attitudes and frames of minds would easily show how genuine the Muslims are in their claim to be worshipping no one but Allah, and how dubious the position of the others is in this respect. Even if we accept the claim that idols or icons are no more than a means to an end, one would, in employing idols as a "support", still be required to produce a relevant injunction from a Sharī'ah which has not been abrogated as yet. Today, the Muslims alone possess such a Sharī'ah.

Before we proceed, we must sound a note of caution. Verse 115 says that whichever way one turns, one would find "the face of Allah", and that Allah being "All-Embracing" surrounds everything. Wisdom lies in not trying to investigate unnecessarily into the meanings of these or similar statements. For, just as it is not at all possible for a creature to comprehend fully the "Being" (*Dhāt*) of Allah, it is equally impossible to comprehend the essential reality of the "Attributes" (*Sifāt*). All that man is required to do is to have a general faith in the Realities of the Divine Order - there is no obligation for him to look into the particularities of this sphere which is totally beyond human reach.

Injunctions and related considerations

Verse 114 lays down, or helps us to infer, some very important injunctions:-

(1) All the mosques in the world are equally worthy of respect. Just as it is a great sin to desecrate in any way the *Baytul-Maqdis*, or the mosque attached to the Ka'bah (*Al-Masjid al-Hārām*) or the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the same prohibition holds good with regard to all other mosques. These three mosques, no doubt, enjoy a

superior position, and special respect is to be paid to them. The reward for offering prayers once in *Al-Masjid al-Harām* is equal to that of praying a hundred thousand times elsewhere; the reward for praying in the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and in the *Baytul-Maqdis* equals that of praying fifty thousand times. To make a long journey for the purpose of praying in any one of these three mosques is a meritorious act which makes one worthy of receiving a special *barakah*. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden it that one should make a long journey in order to offer one's prayers in a mosque other than these three, believing it to be a meritorious act.

The sanctity of the Mosque

(2) It is forbidden to prevent people, in any form or manner possible, from offering their prayers or "remembering" Allah in a mosque. An obvious form of such interference is not to allow someone to enter a mosque or to offer his prayers or to read the Holy Qur'an there. A less explicit form is to produce some kind of a noise in the mosque itself or play music nearby, and thus to disturb people in their prayers or in their "remembrance" (ذكر) of Allah. Similarly, if one starts reciting the Holy Qur'ān or "remembering" Allah loudly so as to disturb the people who are offering supererogatory prayers (*Nawāfil*) or themselves reading the Holy Qur'ān or silently "remembering" Allah (*Dhikr*), one is being guilty of the same sin. Therefore, the *Fuqahā'* (masters of Islamic jurisprudence) have forbidden this practice. But, if people are not present in the mosque, one may recite the Holy Qur'ān or make "*dhikr*" in a loud voice. On the basis of this principle we can also see that it is forbidden to beg or to collect donations even for a religious purpose while people are engaged in their prayers or in "*dhikr.*"

(3) All the possible forms of laying waste a mosque are forbidden. This includes not only demolishing and destroying a mosque, but also producing conditions which result in a mosque being laid waste or deserted. For, laying waste a mosque implies that few, or only a few people should come there for offering their prayers. A mosque can be said to be flourishing, not on the score of the beauty of its architecture or of its ornamentation, but only when it is full of men who come to pray and to "remember" Allah. Says the Holy Qur'ān:

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ

Only those do populate the mosques of Allah who believe in Allah and in the Day of Judgment, who are steadfast in *Salāh* and pay the *Zakāh*, and do not fear anyone but Allah" (9:18).

So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has foretold that when the Day of Judgment comes close, the mosques of the Muslims would be beautifully designed and decorated and be apparently full of people, but they would in reality be deserted, for a few people would go there for the purpose of offering their prayers. We are also reminded of what the fourth *Khalīfah* and the blessed Companion 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ has said. There are, according to him, six deeds which behove a man -- three of them pertain to the state when one is living at home, and the other three to the state when one is on a journey. The first three are -- to read the Holy Qur'ān, to populate the mosques, and to bring together a number of friends who wish to serve Allah and His faith. The other three are -- to spend out of what one has over one's needy companions of the way, to be polite to everyone, and to be cheerful with one's co-travellers so long as one does not go beyond the limits allowed by the Sharī'ah. What he means by "populating" the mosques is that one should enter them in a spirit of humility and with the fear of Allah in one's heart, and then engage oneself in prayers or in reciting the Holy Qur'ān or in making "*dhikr*." In opposition to this, the laying waste of mosques would mean that few, or only a few people should offer their prayers in them, or that a set of circumstances is allowed to develop which makes it difficult for those who are present to acquire the proper attitude of humility.

If Verse 114 was revealed on the occasion of the Peace of *Hudaybiyyah* when the *mushrikīn* (associators) of Makkah had prevented the Muslims from entering *Al-Masjid al-Harām*, then it is quite obvious that laying waste a mosque does not merely mean demolishing it, but also that it is not being allowed to be used for the purpose for which it was built -- that is, for *Salāh* and for the *Dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah.

As for Verse 115, we have already pointed out that Allah not being

limited to any particular direction or place, the Muslims do not, in turning towards the Ka'bah, at all mean to worship it, but that this particular orientation has been fixed on account of certain other considerations. We have also noted that for sixteen or seventeen months after the *Hijrah*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions were made to turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* in their prayers under divine commandment. This was, so to say, a practical demonstration of the truth that one can find Allah in every direction, and that Allah's attention encompasses all possible directions and dimensions simultaneously. A further and permanent demonstration of the same truth is provided by the injunction with regard to supererogatory prayers (*Nawāfil*). That is to say, if one wishes to offer such prayers while travelling on a horse or a camel etc., it is not necessary for him even to turn towards the Qiblah, for he is allowed to keep his face towards the direction in which his horse is moving, and to offer his supererogatory prayers through the gestures of his head and arms. In fact, according to certain commentators, Verse 115 lays down just this rule with regard to supererogatory prayers. But one must bear in mind that this injunction applies only to that form of travel which involves animals like a horse or a camel that makes it difficult for one to turn towards the Qiblah. But in other forms of travel (e.g., in a train or a ship or an aeroplane) where it is not difficult to turn towards the Qiblah, one has to adopt the proper orientation even in offering supererogatory prayers. However, should the train or the aeroplane change its direction while one is still praying and there is no room for readjusting one's orientation accordingly, one can go on and finish the prayers in the same state.

Similarly, if one does not know the direction of the Qiblah, nor can correctly determine it on account of the darkness of the night or for some other valid reason, nor can find someone to provide correct information, the same rule would apply in this case too. In such a situation, one is allowed to follow one's conjecture, and to turn in the direction which seems to be the most likely. The direction one chooses would serve as the Qiblah. If, having finished one's prayers, one discovers that the choice of this particular direction was wrong, even then one's prayers would remain acceptable, and one would not have to repeat them.

Verses 116 - 117

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ بَلْ لَّهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
الْاَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ 0 بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاِذَا قَضٰى
اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ 0

And they say: "Allah has got a son." Pure is He. Instead, to Him belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth. All stand obedient to Him. Originator of the heavens and the earth, when He decides a matter, to it He simply says: "Be", and it comes to be. (Verses 116 - 117)

As the Holy Qur'ān reports in some other verses, some of the Jews called the Prophet Uzayr (Ezra عليه السلام) the son of God, as did the Christians in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) and most of them still do, while the *mushrikīn* of Makkah considered the angels to be the daughters of God. These two verses show the absurdity of such assertions. For, even on rational grounds, it is totally impossible that God should have offspring. Were it at all possible, the situation would necessarily involve either of the two alternative characteristics -- the offspring would belong either to the same genus as the father does, or to a different genus. If it belongs to a different genus, that obviously is a defect, while God should in order to be God, be free of all defects -- as reason itself requires, and as Verse 116 affirms. If the offspring belongs to the same genus, that too is a contradiction in terms, for God has no equal and no existent can belong to the same genus as He does.

Let us explain what we mean. God alone is the Necessary Being (*Al-Dhāt al-Wājib*), and hence necessarily carries within Himself the Attributes of Perfection which are peculiar to Him alone and which cannot exist in any one other than God. Now, if we deny a necessary attribute to a certain being, we automatically deny the existence of that being. So, no one other than God can be a necessary being. Insofar as "necessity" is in itself the essence of the Ultimate Reality, or an inalienable quality of the Ultimate Reality, any one other than God cannot share the Reality with Him. Hence, it would be a plain and simple contradiction in terms of claim that any one other than God can belong to the same genus.

Having refuted the false claims of the Jews, the Christians and the *mushrikīn*, the two verses proceed to demonstrate how and why the Attributes of Perfection are peculiar to Allah Himself and Him alone. Firstly, all that exists in heaven or earth belongs to Allah. Secondly, everything is also subservient to Him -- in the sense that no one can interfere with His omnipotence (for example, with His power to create and to destroy), even if some men may be lax in obeying the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Thirdly, He is the Creator and the Inventor of the skies and of the earth. Fourthly, His power of creation is so mighty that when He wishes to do something (for example, wishes to create something), He does not need any instruments or helpers -- all that He does is to say, "Be", and the thing becomes what He wishes it to be. These four qualities are not to be found in anyone other than Allah. In fact, even those who attributed offspring to Him, believed in this truth. Thus, their claims to the contrary stand finally refuted.

The two verses give rise to certain other important considerations.

(1) If Allah has chosen to assign certain tasks to certain angels (for example, sending down rain or bringing to the creatures their nourishment), or has chosen to employ causes, materials or physical forces in order to produce certain effects, He has done so in His wisdom. So, it is neither permissible nor proper that men should look upon these angels or causes or physical forces as being effective agents in themselves, and turn to them for help in their need.

(2) The commentator al-Bayḍāwī has remarked that, Allah being the First Cause of the things, the earlier Sharī'ahs had allowed the use of the title "Father" for Him, but that the ignorant misunderstood and distorted the sense of "Fatherhood" so badly that to entertain such a belief or to apply this title to Allah has now been declared to be an act of infidelity (*Kufr*). As this practice can lead to all kinds of doctrinal disorders, it is no longer permissible to employ this particular word or a similar expression with reference to Allah. [31]

31. As for creation taking place through the Divine Command, "Be", we would like to add a note, following the example of Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in his "Bayān al-Qur'ān", for the benefit of those who happen to be interested in Western philosophy, or in Christian theology, or, worst of all, in the writings of the Orientalists and their translations of Sufi texts. Let us begin by saying that it is a mystery -- and we are

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Verse 118

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللّٰهُ اَوْ تَاْتِيْنَآ اٰيَةٌ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ؕ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ۝

And say those who do not know: "Why is it that Allah does not speak to us, nor does a sign come to us?" So spoke those before them as these men do. Their hearts resemble each other. We have indeed made the signs clear for people who have certitude. (Verse 118)

The Jews, the Christians and the *mushrikīn* used to deny the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ and some of them did so out of sheer malevolence. In order to feel triumphant in this obstinacy, they would make absurd and impossible demands, two of which have

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using the word "mystery", not in the debased and the modern sense, but in the original meaning of the term which implies that certain realities are altogether beyond the reach of human understanding, and that certain other realities cannot and must not, even when partially or wholly understood, be given out to those who have no aptitude for receiving them, and that with regard to them it is advisable "to keep one's lips closed." In these matters, when and what one chooses to reveal is ultimately not the question of liberalism or democratism or egalitarianism, but that of "spiritual etiquette." Having repeated the warning given by Maulanā Thānavī himself, we shall do no more than explaining what "Bayān al-Qur'ān" says on the subject.

Regarding this particular mystery, there is a difference of approach between the two groups of the *Mutakallimīn* (the masters of *al-'Ilm al-Kalām* or dialectical theology). According to the Asha'rī group, "Be, and it comes to be"(كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ :*Kun fa Yakūn*) is a metaphorical or allegorical expression. That is to say, the phrase does not signify that Allah actually addressed an existent and commanded it "to be", but it is an allegorical illustration of His omnipotence, suggesting that there is no interval between an act of will on His part and its realization. The commentator al-Baydawi has adopted this view. But, according to the Maturidi group, the phrase literally means what it says. This approach to the subject, however, produces a difficult problem. A command is given only to an existent. If a thing does not exist at all, how can Allah address it? On the other hand, if a thing does already exist, it is superfluous to command it "to be." The problem can easily be resolved if we keep two considerations in mind. Firstly, this command does not

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been mentioned here. To begin with, they insisted that Allah Himself should speak to them, either directly as He speaks to the angels, or through the angels as He speaks to the prophets, and that He should Himself proclaim his injunctions to them so as to make the intervention of a new prophet unnecessary, or should at least announce that He had sent Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a prophet, thus making it easy for them to have faith in him and to follow his guidance. Should Allah choose not to accept this demand, they were ready with another -- that is, Allah should send them a sign or proof in confirmation of his prophethood.

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belong to the order of *Tashrī‘*: (تشريع : legislation) which requires the addressee to exist in actual fact and to possess understanding; it belongs to the order of *Takwīn* :(تكوين : creation) which is concerned with giving existence to non-existents.

This explanation, in its turn, brings us into the thick of a controversy that has muddled a great deal of Western philosophy and theology. We refer to the question of "creation arising out of nothingness" (Ex Nihilo), and the second of our two considerations will clarify it. It is usual enough to place "existence" (وجود : *Wujūd*) in opposition to "nothingness or non-existence" (عدم : *'Adam*). But it has also been said that non-existence does not exist. For, Allah is omniscient, and Divine Knowledge comprehends everything that has been, or is, or will be, so that what does not yet exist according to our reckoning, does already exist in Divine Knowledge. To use a different expression, everything past, present or future has its "pure" and "subtle" counterpart in Divine Knowledge. If Western terminology should be more easily comprehensible to some of our readers, we can call these Prototypes, Numbers, or Essences, or Ideas or Archetypes, but each time we will have to give a more refined and a higher signification to these terms than Pythagoras or Plato ever did. The Sūfis, however, call them "*Al-A‘yān al-Thābitah.*" With the help of this explanation we can see that when Allah wishes to create a thing, He commands its Essence, which already exists in His Knowledge, "to be", and it "comes to be" -- that is to say, comes to be actualised in the world. Thus, "creation" does not arise out of "nothingness." Before a thing comes to exist as an "actuality" in the world, it already exists as a "potentiality" in Divine Knowledge. It is this "potentiality" to which the Divine Command "Be" is addressed. Hence, it is equally true to say that Essences do not exist, and to say that Essences do exist. The first statement pertains to the knowledge of the creatures, and the second to the Divine Knowledge.

At the end, we shall again insist that no good can come out of unnecessarily meddling with such delicate questions, specially if the purpose is no more than to seek a new sensation.

In reply to them, Allah puts this demand down as being no more than a foolish custom which has all along been unthinkingly practised by ignorant people even in the earlier ages. Then, the verse traces the origin of this demand to a distortion of the heart, in respect of which all the ignorant people, past or present, are alike, hence the parrot-like repetition of the same demand throughout the ages.

The first of these demands was, on the face of it, silly enough, for, with all the grossness of their minds and hearts, they had the audacity to place themselves on the level of angels and prophets. So, the Holy Qur'ān dismisses it as being unworthy of a reply. But in answer to the other demand, Allah reminds them that He has sent, not one, but a number of clear signs and proofs to confirm and establish the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ . But these signs and proofs can be of help only to those who sincerely wish to know the truth and to attain certitude. As for those who are not in search of the truth, but enjoy being stuck in their malice and obstinacy, there is no help for them.

At this point, we had better say a word to resolve a difficulty that is likely to arise. The Jews and the Christians were "the People of the Book", and some of them were men of learning, and yet Allah calls them ignorant. Why? The reason is that although Allah had sent such a large number of clear signs and definite proofs to establish the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ , yet they persisted in their denial. This is the mentality and the conduct of the ignorant.

Verse 119

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَّنَذِيرًا وَّلَا تُسْـَٔلُ عَنْ أَصْحٰبِ الْجَحِيمِ ۝

Surely, We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner, and you will not be asked about the people of Hell. (Verse 119)

The implication of Verse 118 was that those who persisted in their denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did so out of sheer malice and ignorance, and could not be expected to reform themselves. Since he has been

sent as "the mercy for all the worlds", the thought of their being incorrigible was likely to make him sad on their account. So, in this verse Allah offers him a consolation. He has been sent down to men, bearing the truth and the genuine faith. His function is twofold -- to give glad tidings to those who accept the truth, and warnings of dire punishment to those who deny. Allah assures him that he will not be held responsible or taken to account for those who willingly pursue the way to Hell. All that he is required to do is to keep performing his own function, and not to worry as to who accepts the truth and who does not.

Verse 120

وَلَنْ تَرْضٰى عَنْكَ الْيَهُوْدُ وَلَا النَّصٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ؕ قُلْ
اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدٰى ؕ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِىْ
جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِىٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ O

And the Jews will never be pleased with you, nor will the Christians, unless you follow their faith. Say: "Guidance of Allah is, indeed, the guidance." And were you to follow their desires after what has come to you of the knowledge, there shall be no friend for you against Allah, nor a helper. (Verse 120)

Being anxious to save as many men as possible from misguidance and damnation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took great pains to convince the deniers, and was specially lenient and gentle with the People of the Book. In this verse, Allah informs him that their denial is not due to lack of convincing arguments and proofs, but is motivated by pride and self-satisfaction, for each of the two groups -- namely, the Jews and the Christians -- believes its own religion to be the only genuine religion, and there is no likelihood of pleasing either of them until and unless the Holy Prophet ﷺ accepts their religion. The religions of the Jews and the Christians, no doubt, were once genuine and had been instituted by Allah. But each had since distorted its religion out of shape; moreover, in sending down Islam as the final Sharī'ah, Allah had abrogated all the earlier ones, and hence Islam had by now become the only Sharī'ah acceptable to Allah, and in this sense the only genuine and veritable "guidance" possible in this last of all the ages.

It is on account of the present distorted state of the earlier religions, and specially because of their having been abrogated by Divine Commandment that Verse 120 equates them with *Ahwā'* (the plural of *Hawā*) -- that is to say, personal desires, or individual opinions and baseless conjectures. Since the deniers are not willing to extricate themselves from their desires and fancies, it is not possible to please them without accepting their opinions -- a thing which a Messenger of Allah can never do. Should they affect a more friendly stance towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ , Allah asks him to say to them in plain and simple words that the only guidance worth the name is that which comes from Allah -- and He has already made it clear enough that Islam is now the only form of "guidance" acceptable to Him.

Now, supposing just for the sake of supposing that he should accept their fancies in spite of having received the Truth from Allah through revelation, the verse informs him that in such a case he would find no helper to save him from divine wrath. Other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, of course, definitely establish the fact that Allah is pleased and will always remain pleased with the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and thus he can never be the object of divine wrath. Since divine wrath necessarily follows upon the acceptance of baseless fancies, it is logically impossible for him to follow the opinions of the Jews and the Christians, as divine pleasure and divine wrath cannot be combined with each other. On the other hand, they can never be pleased with him unless he follows their wishes. Consequently, one cannot expect from them any change of heart. Hence, the purport of Verse 120 is to advise the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to worry too much about them. [32]

Verse 121

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ
وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ۝

32. Let us add that the warning is apparently addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , but is really intended for deniers, the purpose being to make them realize the dire consequences of their vanity. In fact, divine wrath is already visible, for the warning has been administered to them, not directly but obliquely, which shows the contempt in which Allah holds them -- Translator]

Those to whom We have given the Book and they recite it observing the rights of its recitation, it is they who believe in it. And those who disbelieve in it, they are the losers. (Verse 121)

Verse 120 dealt with the hopeless condition of the opponents of Islam among the People of the Book. Now, the present verse turns, in the usual manner of the Holy Qur'ān, to the other aspect, and speaks of those Jews and Christians who were honest and just, and, having recognised the truth, affirmed the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accepted Islam.

The verse tells us how it has been possible for these men to effect a radical change in themselves. Allah has given a Book to the Christians as well as to the Jews. But, unlike most of their co-religionists, these men have been reading the Book "observing the rights of its recitation." That is to say, they have distorted neither the words nor the meanings, nor have they tried to misinterpret or conceal the prophecies about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . In other words, they have used their intellect in trying to understand the meanings, and their will in accepting the truth and in following it. It is they who acknowledge the Holy Qur'ān, and have faith in it. In doing so, they are actually affirming their own Books too and acting upon them insofar as their Books explicitly foretell the coming of the Last Prophet ﷺ and of the last Book of Allah. As for those who persist in their denial, they are bound to suffer the greatest loss, for they have refused to believe in the Last Revelation, and have, in fact, not shown much of a belief in their own Books, and not followed the guidance provided by them in this matter. [33]

33. The commentary we have here is based on a report from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, according to whom this verse was revealed on the occasion of the arrival of forty Christians from Abyssinia who had accepted Islam. But other commentators believe that "those to whom We have given the Book" are the blessed Companions, and "the Book" is the Holy Qur'ān. As for reading the Book "observing the rights of its recitation", it means enunciating each word correctly and clearly, and keeping the fear and love of Allah present in one's heart while reading, and also the resolve to follow divine guid^nce and to obey divine commandments. The blessed second *Khalīfah* 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ has said that reading the Holy Qur'ān "observing the rights of its recitation" requires that when one comes to a description of Paradise, one should pray to Allah for granting one this abode, and when one finds a description of Hell, one should seek Allah's protection from it. (Ibn Abi Ḥātim)]

Verses 122 - 123

يٰبَنِىٓ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَتِىَ الَّتِىۡٓ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَنِّىۡ
فَضَّلۡتُكُمۡ عَلَى الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۝ وَاتَّقُوۡا يَوۡمًا لَّا تَجۡزِىۡ نَفۡسٌ عَنۡ
نَّفۡسٍ شَيۡـًٔا وَّلَا يُقۡبَلُ مِنۡهَا عَدۡلٌ وَّلَا تَنۡفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَّلَا هُمۡ
يُنۡصَرُوۡنَ ۝

O children of Isrā'il, remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and that I gave you excellence over the worlds. And guard yourselves against a day when no one shall stand for anyone for anything, nor shall ransom be accepted from one, nor shall intercession be of benefit to him, nor shall they be given support. (Verses 122 - 123)

A large section of this Sūrah, ending with the previous verse, has been dealing with different aspects of the conduct of the Israelites (that is, the Jews) in the course of their history. This account had begun with the statement which has been repeated at the end in these two verses. The statement is of a general and principal kind, and the verses which come in between the beginning and the end are, so to say, a detailed demonstration of the statement. On the one hand, it encourages the Israelites to come back to the Straight Path by reminding them of the blessings which Allah has bestowed on them; on the other hand, it warns them of the consequences of their lapses by depicting the Day of Judgment. The purpose of repeating the statement at the end of the discussion is to make the two ideas sink deep into their minds. For, what is aimed at in a discussion is the affirmation of certain basic and general principles -- being succinct, they are easily kept alive in the mind, and, being comprehensive and readily applicable to particular situations, they make it easy for one to remember the details too. In the art of writing and speaking, it is considered to be one of the most effective means of carrying conviction that, before starting on a long analytical discussion of a subject, one should define the basic ideas very briefly and clearly which are always helpful in comprehending the details and the particularities, and that, in concluding the argument, one should repeat these ideas by way of a

summary. The repetition of the introductory statement here is of this very nature.

Verse 124

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرٰهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمٰتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظّٰلِمِينَ ۝

And when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test with certain Words! And he fulfilled them. He said, "I am going to make you an *Imām* for the people." He said, "And from among my progeny?" He replied, "My promise does not extend to the unjust." (Verse 124) [34]

The great trials put to Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

The section dealing with the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام begins with Verse 124. It recounts how he was tried by Allah in different ways, how he came out of these trials successfully, and how he was rewarded. It also tells us that when Allah promised to make him a great guide to men, and their chief, (by conferring prophethood

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34. So far a whole section of this Sūrah has been dealing directly with the conduct of the Jews in the course of their history, and their present hostility to Islam, delineating the inner motives and mainsprings of this rabid opposition. As we have seen, they were proud of being the children of Jacob and of Abraham (Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليهم السلام), and believed that, being the chosen people of God, they had the exclusive privilege of being the leaders of humanity, and hence the station of prophethood could not be conferred on anyone who did not belong to their race. Now, the Holy Qur'an proceeds, in the present section of the Surah, to refute this line of thought in an indirect manner, by telling the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and of his elder son Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (Ishmael عليه السلام). This section is going to suggest some essential considerations in answer to the denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the part of the Jews:- (1) He alone can be a guide to humanity who is not unjust and not a transgressor, and has successfully gone through the trial imposed on him by Allah -- and these qualifications the Jews do not fulfil. (2) The Ka'bah, towards which the Muslims turn in *Salāh* and which is not acceptable to the Jews, had actually been built by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and hence

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on him, or by giving him a huge number of followers), he prayed for this reward to be bestowed on some from among his progeny too. Allah granted this prayer, but on one condition, which is also to serve as a general principle in this matter -- namely, that this dignity shall never be conferred on those who are disobedient and unjust, but on some of those from among his progeny who are obedient and just.

Now, Verse 124 gives rise to a number of very fundamental questions:- The purpose of a trial is to test the aptitude and worthiness of a man for a certain function, but Allah is all-knowing and knows every existent inside out. Then, what was the purpose of this trial? (2) What were the different forms of this trial? (3) What kind of success did Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام attain? (4) What is the nature of the reward he received? (5) What are the various aspects of the principle which defines the conditions necessary for receiving this reward ?

As for the purpose of the trials which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was made to undergo, we shall point out that the Arabic word رب : *Rabb* (Lord) occurring in this verse provides the clue to the problem. In saying that it was Allah Himself who put him through the trials, the verse chooses to employ, out of all the Divine Names, the title *Rabb*

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the orientation (Qiblah) of the Muslims is the same as was his. (3) The way of Islam is the Way of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and the Muslims alone are his real followers. (4) It was Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام himself who had prayed for the Last Prophet to be sent down to humanity, and hence one who at all wishes to follow his way cannot but affirm the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accept Islam. (5) It is wrong of the Jews to deny the Holy Prophet ﷺ merely on account of his not belonging to their race, for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had two sons, Sayyidnā Ismā'īl and Sayyidnā Isḥāq (Ishmael and Isaac عليهم السلام), and he had prayed for divine grace to descend on both of them (Genesis, ch. 17), so that the superiority enjoyed by the children of Isaac عليه السلام in their own time had now been transferred to the children of Ismā'īl عليه السلام . What these indications aim at is to show the Jews that if they wish to have a share in the grace of Allah, they had better acknowledge the Holy Prophet ﷺ and accept Islam, the last and now the only valid form of the Abrahamic Way -- **Translator.**

which indicates a specific Divine Attribute -- namely, that of making a thing attain the state of its perfection gradually and stage by stage. In other words, the trial of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was not the punishment for a crime, nor was it intended to uncover a hidden aptitude, but was a manifestation of this particular Divine Action, and a necessary part of the process of "nurturing" the prophet and making him reveal his inherent qualities to the world, so that he may be led, stage by stage, to assume his final station, already chosen for him by his Lord. We may note, in passing, that the Arabic text of the Verse places the object (*Ibrāhīm*) before the subject (*Rabb*), thus indicating the glorious position of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام among the prophets. We may also add that although it is Divine Knowledge and Will that chooses a man for prophethood, yet he is not allowed to assume this station until his aptitude and worthiness has openly shown itself for all men and angels to witness. This is just what had happened, as we have already seen in this Sūrah, in the case of the trial of Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام before the angels.

As for the particular form in which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was tried, the Holy Qur'ān only refers to certain "things" (*Kalimah* -- literally, "word"). According to most of the commentators, the "things" or "words" mean certain divine injunctions. But there is some difference of views among the blessed Companions and their immediate successors as to what these injunctions were, and how many. According to some, they were ten, and, according to others, thirty. But basically there is no opposition among these views, for all the injunctions which have been mentioned in this context were, in one way or another, meant to serve as trials and tests. This is what the great commentators like Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr believe to be the truth of the matter. One thing is, however, quite clear. These trials were not like academic tests, nor were intended to gauge mental capacities or the grasp of mere theories; the purpose, on the other hand, was to test the readiness in obeying Allah and the steadfastness in submitting oneself to divine commandments. This helps us to see that what really has a value in the eyes of Allah is not theoretical hair-splitting, but actual deeds, within and without.

Let us now relate the story of some of the more important trials.

Since Allah intended to raise Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to a specially exalted station among the prophets, and to confer on him the title of *Khalīlullāh* (the Friend of Allah), he was made to go through very severe trials. Not only his people, but his own family also was sunk deep in idol-worshipping; in opposition to their creed and customs, he was given *"Al-Dīn al-Hanīf"*, "the Pure Religion", and was asked to go out to his people, and to bring them back to the Straight Path. Unflinchingly he obeyed the divine command, and, with the courage and determination of the prophet that he was, he set out to wage a war against idol-worship and to call them to the unalloyed worship of the One God. This obviously drew upon him the ire of his people and of their king *Namrūd* (Nimrod), who finally decided to burn him alive in a blazing fire. Seeking, as he did, nothing but the pleasure of his Lord, he gladly let himself be thrown onto the pyre. Since he had succeeded in this test, Allah commanded: قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَّسَلٰمًا عَلٰى إِبْرٰهِيمَ: "O fire, be coolness and safety for Ibrāhīm" (21:69). As one can see, the command was given to fire as such, and not to any particular one. Consequently, all fire, wherever it was present in the world, grew cold, and the fire set ablaze by *Namrūd* did so, too. Now, excessive cold is equally painful and killing - there is a region of extreme cold in Hell itself, called *Zamharīr*. So, in commanding fire to grow cold, Allah in His grace added the word *Salama* (be safe).

The second trial was that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was asked to leave his homeland, and to migrate to Syria along with his family. Then, he was commanded to leave even this country -- which he readily did, accompanied by his wife Hājirah (Hāgar - رضى الله عنها) and his infant son Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (Ishmael عليه السلام), and led by the archangel Jibrā'īl (Gabriel عليه السلام). (Ibn Kathīr) Whenever they passed through a fertile land, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام would wish to be allowed to settle there, but the archangel would inform him that Allah did not want him to do so. Finally, when they reached the barren desert which was destined to be the site of Makkah and where the Ka'bah was to be built, he was commanded to stay there. But now began a new trial, much more difficult for man to bear. He was ordered to leave his wife and son in the desert, and to go back to Syria. "The Friend of Allah" had so annihilated his own will and desire, and

was so anxious to obey his Lord that he did not allow even a moment to lapse between the command and its execution, and started on his journey without informing his wife. When she noticed that he was going away, she called after him -- but received no reply. Not even when she demanded why he was forsaking them in such a vast and lonely desert. But she was, after all, the wife of "the Friend of Allah", and could now see for herself how the matters stood. So, she asked if he had received a divine command. Only now Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام replied that it was so. Having understood the situation, she calmly remarked, "Alright, go. The Lord who has commanded you to part from us shall Himself look after us, and not let us be destroyed."

And she sat back in the desert, full of trust and peace, with the infant on her lap. But as time passed, thirst, her own and specially that of her suckling son, compelled her to leave it behind and to go in search of water. She climbed up and down the hills of Ṣafā and Marwah, but had, after seven attempts, to come back unsuccessfully. It is to commemorate this event that running seven times between the two hills has been made an obligatory part of the rites of the Hajj. As she returned to her son, the mercy of Allah descended in the form of the archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام who made a spring of fresh water spout forth from the parched ground -- the same spring which is now called *Zamzam*. In a day or two, the water began to draw animals towards itself, and the sight of animals brought men to the place. By and by, the provisions necessary for human life became regularly available, and the future city of Makkah began to take shape.

The infant -- who was to become Sayyidnā Ismā'īl, عليه السلام -- began to grow up, and was soon able to take upon himself the usual functions of human life. Under divine permission, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام came now and then to see how his wife and son were doing. It is now that Allah chose to submit him to the greatest of all possible trials. The son had grown up in such unpromising circumstances, and been deprived of constant fatherly care and affection. Now, the father received the command to slaughter his son with his own hand. Says the Holy Qur'ān:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰى فِي الْمَنَامِ اَنِّيْٓ اَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا

تَرٰی ؕ قَالَ یٰۤاَبَتِ افۡعَلۡ مَا تُؤۡمَرُ ۫ سَتَجِدُنِیۡۤ اِنۡ شَآءَ اللّٰہُ مِنَ الصّٰبِرِیۡنَ O

> When he had reached the age of being able to help his father in his work, the latter said, 'My son, I see in a dream that I am slaughtering you. Now, say, what do you think?' He replied, 'My father, do as you have been bidden; you shall find me, if Allah so wills, one of the patient'. (37: 102)

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام took his son to the wilderness of *Minā*, and fulfilled, so far as he himself was concerned, the divine commandment. But Allah did not really mean to have the son slaughtered, but only to test the father. If we consider the words of the Holy Qur'ān just cited, we shall find that in his dream, he had not seen the accomplishment of the slaughter, but only the act of slaughtering. And this much he did perform. In this respect, revelation came to him in the form of a dream, picturing the act, perhaps for this very reason - that is to say, Allah did not want to give him a verbal command to sacrifice his son. Hence, Allah commended him for having صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا : "confirmed the dream" (37:105). In recompense for this total submission to divine will, Allah sent down a ram from heaven to be sacrificed in place of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام . Now, the annual sacrifice of sheep or goats etc. has been made a regular form of worship in commemoration of the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام .

In addition to those rigorous trials, a number of other restrictions were imposed on him in the shape of certain injunctions, which too, he fulfilled as devotionally. Ten of these commandments are known as the characteristics of the *Fitrah* and are concerned with the cleanliness and purification of the body. These ten have been made permanent injunctions for all the later *Ummahs* (or communities of believers) too, and the Last Prophet ﷺ has insistently commanded his followers to fulfil them.

Ibn Kathīr has reported from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that thirty elements make up the whole of Islam, ten of which have been mentioned in Sūrah, ("Al-Barā'ah, or "Al-Tawbah"), the other ten in Sūrah 33 ("Al-Aḥzāb"), and the last ten in Sūrah 23 ("Al-Mu'minūn"). These two had formed a part of the trials of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and he fulfilled these conditions with equal faithfulness.

Sūrah 9 lays down these ten qualities as being characteristic of true believers:

اَلتَّائِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ الْحٰمِدُوْنَ السَّآئِحُوْنَ الرّٰكِعُوْنَ السّٰجِدُوْنَ الْاٰمِرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَالنَّاهُوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحٰفِظُوْنَ لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰهِ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ O

"Those who repent, those who worship (Allah), those who praise (Allah), those who keep a fast, those who bow down and prostrate themselves (before Allah), those who invite others to good deeds and forbid evil deeds, those who keep within the bounds fixed by Allah. And give good tidings to the true believers." (9:112)

And the ten qualities mentioned in Sūrah 23 are:

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ O الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ صَلَاتِهِمْ خٰشِعُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ
مُعْرِضُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِلزَّكٰوةِ فٰعِلُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ O اِلَّا
عَلٰۤى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ O فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ
ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ O وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ
عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ O اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ O الَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ
فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ O

"Those true believers shall certainly prosper who show humility in their *Salāh*, and turn away from idle activities, and are keen to purify themselves, and guard their private parts except from their wives and what their right hands own (bondswomen) - which is not blameworthy, but whoever seeks after more than that is a transgressor - and those who preserve what has been entrusted to them and also their covenant, and who are regular in performing their *Salāh*. Those are the inheritors who shall inherit Paradise, and they shall live there forever." (23:1-11).

And the ten qualities mentioned in Sūrah 33 are as follows:

اِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ وَالْقٰنِتٰتِ وَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ
وَالصّٰدِقٰتِ وَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ وَالصّٰبِرٰتِ وَ الْخٰشِعِيْنَ وَالْخٰشِعٰتِ وَ الْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ
وَالْمُتَصَدِّقٰتِ وَ الصَّآئِمِيْنَ وَالصّٰٓئِمٰتِ وَ الْحٰفِظِيْنَ فُرُوْجَهُمْ وَ الْحٰفِظٰتِ وَالذّٰكِرِيْنَ
اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّالذّٰكِرٰتِ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَّاَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا O

"Men and women who perform what Islam enjoins upon them,

> men and women who are true believers, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women, men and women who are patient, men and women who possess humility, men and women who give in charity, men who fast and women who fast, men and women who guard their private parts, men and women who remember Allah abundantly - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward." (33:35)

A third question with regard to Verse 124 still remains to be answered - what degree of success did Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام attain in these trials? The Holy Qur'ān defines his accomplishment in these words: وَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِيْ وَفّٰٓى : "And Ibrahim who paid his debt in full." (53:37)

As for the reward he received, Verse 124 itself has announced it: قَالَ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ اِمَامًا · "He (Allah) said - "I am going to make you an *Īmām* for the people." The Arabic word *Īmām*, which we have not translated here, lexically signifies "leader or chief or guide." Since the present verse is related to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the word *'Īmām* in this context means, above all, "a prophet", though it includes the general sense of "leadership", too, as also of the title "Patriarch" which the Jews and Christians have given to him. Prophethood, let us repeat, cannot be won through personal effort; all the same, a prophet has to display his perfection in the thirty qualities we have just referred to, and even people of a lower scale must, in order to be worthy of leadership in a general sense, possess these qualities in their own degree. The Holy Qur'ān makes it quite plain in another place:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ O

> "And from among them We appointed some as leaders to guide men by Our command, when they were patient (in restraining themselves from disobedience), and had a sure faith in Our commandments." (32:24).

This verse gives a resume of the thirty qualities in the two words, *Ṣabr* (patience) and *Yaqīn* (sure faith, or certitude) - the second refers to the perfection of knowledge, and the first to the perfection of actual practice.

The last question pertains to the law which lays down that the station of a guide and leader would not be granted to the unjust and the disobedient. To hold this station is, in a way, to be a viceregent of

Allah, and hence this rank cannot be given to a rebel. It follows from this that Muslims, insofar as they have a choice in the matter, should not appoint as their ruler or representative a man who is a rebel against Allah or disobedient to Him.

The word *ẓālim* ("unjust") also shows us - and very explicitly, too - that each and every prophet is totally sinless before becoming a prophet as much as after becoming a prophet. Certain words in the Holy Qur'ān, which seem to suggest the contrary, have been employed, not in a literal or technical sense, but only metaphorically - for example, in the case of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام . To interpret such expressions in the sense of technical "sin" constitutes a very grave doctrinal error, and an insistence on such an interpretation opens the way to further errors.[35]

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35. We may add a few words for the benefit of those who are anxious to adopt unquestioningly the literary and philosophical mores of the West. Since the Second World War, the writings of the Danish man of letters and thinker, Kierkegaard (who was a dilettante in theology too), have been casting a sort of paralysing fascination over the men of sensibility in the West. Particularly his book "Fear and Trembling", which deals with the trial of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام avowedly in the manner of a psychological novel, is supposed to have triggered into action a number of Existentialist philosophies, and even to have furnished the point of departure for all modernistic Christian theology, specially of the Protestant persuasion.

Now, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was, even according to the admission of Jews and Christians, a prophet, and not "l'homme moyen sensuel" which is the subject matter of the novel, of psychology, and, not the least, of the theology of the Dane.

Secondly, he did not merely have to go through emotional stress and strain, or through a problem of the conscience, or through a "crisis of identity" - the fear and the trembling, as the philosopher maintains -, but was equally tried in the matter of faithfully observing divine injunctions.

Thirdly, when he knew that Allah had chosen him to be a prophet, he did not grow silent and secretive and lonely - as the fancy of our literary artist would have us believe -, but proclaimed the fact to others. Without such a proclamation, he would not at all have been able to perform the function of a prophet. In fact, it has been said that "the Friend of Allah" would not take his daily meals until he had found a guest to share it with him. In short, all we wish to point out is that the nature of prophethood is a degree of reality which we can understand only partially, and that too only with the help of Divine Books, and hence it is not a sphere in which human fantasy may be allowed to roam at its sweet will.

Verse 125

وَاِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَاَمْنًا ؕ وَاتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّقَامِ
اِبْرٰهٖمَ مُصَلًّى ؕ وَعَهِدْنَآ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ اَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِىَ
لِلطَّآئِفِيْنَ وَالْعٰكِفِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ O

And when We made the House a (sacred) resort for men, and a place of peace! And make from the station of Ibrahim a place of prayer. And We gave direction to Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl: "Purify My House for those who are to circumambulate (make *Tawāf*) or stay in seclusion (do *I'tikāf*) or bow and prostrate (in prayer)." (Verse 125)

The History of Ka'bah

In the course of the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, we now come to the building of the "House of Allah" - the Ka'bah. An answer is thus being given to the Jews who used to deny the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the ground of their assumption that prophethood could not be given to anyone outside their own clan, and who used to scoff at the Muslims for turning towards the Ka'bah in their prayers, and to believe that the Hajj was no more than a custom of the ignorant Arabs. The earlier verse had made it clear that prophethood could not be given to the unjust and the disobedient, even if they belonged to the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - a rule which destroys the very basis of the presumptuousness and vanity of the Jews. The present verse reminds them that the Ka'bah was built under divine commandment by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام himself with the help of his son Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام, and thus suggests that the performance of the Hajj and the orientation towards the Ka'bah have both been instituted by divine decree, and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a direct descendant of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام, and is reviving the Abrahamic Way, which the Jews too must follow.

Verse 125 briefly outlines the history of the re-construction of the Ka'bah, the characteristic qualities of the "House of Allah" and the city of Makkah, and the injunctions with regard to the respect which has to be paid to this sacred place. The Holy Qur'ān returns to the subject again and again in different chapters, providing more details. We shall

cite Verses 26 and 27 from the Sūrah "Al-Hajj" which deals particularly with the annual pilgrimage:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرٰهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْـًٔا وَّطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآئِفِينَ وَالْقَآئِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ۝ وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ ۝

"And when We appointed for Ibrāhīm the place of the House: "You shall not associate anything with Me. And keep My House clean for those who circumambulate it, who stand there for the prayers, and who bow and prostrate themselves. And proclaim the pilgrimage among men, and they shall come to you on foot and on every lean camel too, coming from every deep ravine.." (22:26-27)

Ibrāhīm عليه السلام migrated to Makkah

Ibn Kathir reports from Mujāhid etc. that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was living in Syria when he received the revelation that Allah was going to indicate to him the site of the Ka'bah, which he was required to build and keep clean for those who should assemble there for performing the Hajj and offering the *Salāh*. In connection with the earlier verse, we have already told the story how he was led by the archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام to the desert where the city of Makkah is now situated and where the remains of the earlier structure of the Ka'bah stood only in the shape of a mound, and how he was commanded by Allah to leave his wife and infant son behind and to return to Syria. He immediately started on the journey, but was naturally anxious about his wife and child. So, when he was out of ear-shot, he prayed to Allah for them, as has been reported in the Sūrah "Ibrāhīm":

رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ ۝

"My Lord, make this city a place of peace, and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols." (14:35)

And he prayed further:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِيٓ إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ ۝

> "Our Lord, I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley which is incultivable, close to Your Holy House that they may, Our Lord, be steadfast in the prayers. So, make the hearts of men tender towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may be thankful." (14:37)

In the earlier commandment which had brought him to his place, Allah had asked him to keep His House clean. He knew that Allah intended the House to be kept clean not only from external dirt but also from internal filth - namely, association (*Shirk*) and infidelity (*Kufr*). So, while departing from this barren desert where he was leaving his family but where a town was to grow, he prayed to Allah, firstly, to make it a place of safety and peace, and, secondly, to protect him and his children from idol-worship and association. "The Friend of Allah" had attained that degree of knowledge where one sees oneself as a mere nothing, and one makes no movement without a full realization of the truth that nothing happens independently of Divine Will, and that all one's actions and even inclinations rest in the hand of Allah. So, he turned to Allah Himself for help in being able to carry out the command to keep the House of Allah clean from association and infidelity. There is another subtle suggestion in this prayer. Allah had commanded that due respect should be paid to His "House." Now, there was a likelihood that some people might begin, out of sheer ignorance, to worship the Ka'bah itself. That is why Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام specially prayed for him and his children to be protected from association (*shirk*). Then, out of his love for his wife and son, he prayed to Allah to provide them, in His grace, with fruits in this barren and uncultivable land where he was leaving them under divine command.

A *ḥadīth* in Al-Bukhārī's collection of the Traditions (*Aḥādīth*) tells us in detail how the archangel Jibra'il appeared and made the spring of *Zamzam* flow in the desert, how some people from the tribe of *Jurhum* came and settled there, and how Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام was married to a lady of this tribe. We also learn from different Traditions (*Aḥādīth*) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the command to settle near the Ka'bah and to keep it clean (mentioned in Verse 26-27 of the Sūrah

"Al-Hajj") was at that time addressed only to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, for his son was yet an infant. And in those circumstances the intention of the command was not to start the reconstruction of the Ka'bah but only to place the wife and the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in this locality so that a human settlement should begin to take shape. On the other hand, the verse we are dealing with (2:125) repeats the same command to keep the House clean, but is addressed as much to Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام as to his father, for the son had now grown into a young and married man, and could be included in the command to rebuild the Ka'bah.

A *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī says that, on one of his periodic visits to his wife and son at Makkah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام found his son sitting under a tree, making arrows. He informed the son that Allah had entrusted him with a special task, and asked him if he would help his father. The son was, of course, as ready to obey and to serve as ever. Allah had already indicated the spot and also the area where the Ka'bah was to be rebuilt. When they started digging the ground, the earlier foundations became visible, and it was on them that they began to raise the walls. The next verse speaks of this event - وَاِذْ يَرْفَعُ اِبْرٰهٖمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلُ : "When Ibrāhīm was raising up the foundations of the House, and Ismā'īl (too)." The order of the names indicates that the builder of the Ka'bah is Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, while the role of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام is that of a helper.

All the verses of the Holy Qur'ān on the subject of the Ka'bah either say that the location had been indicated by Allah Himself, or report the divine command to keep the House clean, but never suggest that a new House was to be built in a new place. This in itself shows that the Ka'bah already existed in some form. Indeed, the *Ḥadīth*, and history too, confirms this fact, and from these sources we learn that the earlier structure of the Ka'bah had either been destroyed at the time of the Deluge of Sayyidnā Nūḥ (Noah عليه السلام) or raised into the heavens, leaving the foundations buried in the ground. Hence, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام were not the original founders of the Ka'bah, but had raised a new building on the earlier foundations.

As to who founded the Ka'bah for the first time and when, there is no fully authenticated *Ḥadīth* which could clarify this point. Certain narrations coming from the people of the Book, however, tell us that it was founded by the angels even before Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام came down to the earth. He built the Ka'bah a second time, or renovated it. This structure remained intact upto the time of the Deluge, which destroyed it, and left it a mere mound - the shape in which Sayyidna Ibrahim and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام found it. And they constructed a new building on the site. Since then, the Ka'bah has undergone certain alterations, but has never been demolished completely. Before the Holy Prophet ﷺ assumed the prophetic functions, the Quraysh of Makkah built the Ka'bah afresh, and he himself took part in this renovation.

Some injunctions related to the Haram

(1) The word *Maṭhābah*, used in this verse, comes from the root *Thaba* (signifying "to come back"), and thus denotes a place to which one returns again and again. This shows that Allah has given a position of privilege to the Ka'bah - it shall always remain a place where people will assemble from the four corners of the world, and would long to return to it again and again. Al-Qurṭubī reports the great commentator Mujāhid to have said that one never has enough of visiting the Ka'bah, but comes back every time with a greater longing to return, and to see it again. Certain scholars have remarked that one of the signs of one's Ḥajj having been accepted by Allah is that, on one's return, one should find in one's heart a greater desire to present oneself in the House of Allah again. This is borne out by the experience of those who have had the good fortune to be there - each visit, instead of slaking the thirst, rather increases it. Considering that Makkah has nothing to offer by way of a beautiful landscape or easy access or mundane comforts, yet, its power to draw millions of people to itself every year is nothing short of miracle.

(2) This verse says that Allah has made "the House" a place of peace. "The House" refers not only to the Ka'bah itself, but also to the whole area of the Mosque which surrounds it, and is called the *Ḥaram*. There are other instances in the Holy Qur'ān where the word "Ka'bah" or the expression *Baytullah* ("House of Allah") connotes the whole

area of the *Ḥaram*. For example, the phrase: هَدْيًا بَالِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ : "an offering to reach the Ka'bah" (5:95) refers to the *Ḥaram*, for the verse deals with the subject of animal sacrifice, while it is not legitimate to offer such a sacrifice inside the Ka'bah. So, Verse 125 means that the whole of the *Ḥaram* has been made a place of peace - that is to say, people have been forbidden from shedding blood or taking revenge within these precincts (Ibn al-'Arabi). In fact, this commandment was one of the residues of the Way of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام which were still alive in the Age of Ignorance (*Al-Jāhiliyyah*), and all kinds of bloodshed or battle, individual or collective, were held to be forbidden inside this sanctuary, so much so that a man would never let himself take his revenge, even if he came upon the murderer of his brother or father in the *Ḥaram*. The Islamic Sharī'ah has preserved this injunction. The ban was lifted only for the sake of the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the day of the conquest of Makkah, and that too only for a few hours, and was reimposed for ever immediately after - the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself announced it in his address on the occasion. (Al-Bukhārī)

Now, as for the man who commits, within these precincts, a crime for which the Shari'ah has laid down a specific physical punishment (*Ḥadd*) or allowed the victim to be revenged (*Qiṣāṣ*), the *Ḥaram* will not provide sanctuary to him - the consensus holds that such a criminal will be duly punished. (Al-Jassas and Al-Qurtubi) For, the Holy Qur'ān itself says: فَإِنْ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ : "If they fight you [inside the *Ḥaram*], you may kill them." (2:191) There is, however, a difference of views among the masters of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) on one point. What is to be done with the man who commits a crime outside, and then seeks a sanctuary in the *Ḥaram*? Even in this case, some masters would have the criminal punished in the manner prescribed by the Sharī'ah. On the other hand, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, believes that if such men are allowed to save themselves from punishment in this manner, the *Ḥaram* would become an easy refuge for all kinds of criminals and disorder would prevail, but in view of the sanctity of the place, the criminal would not be punished inside the *Ḥaram*, but forced to come out, and then the punishment prescribed by the Shari'ah would be duly given to him.

(3) The present verse mentions "the Station of Ibrāhīm." It is a

stone on which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ had stood while building the Ka'bah, and which miraculously acquired the print of his foot. (Al-Bukhārī) The blessed Companions Anas says that he has himself seen the mark on the stone. On the other hand, it has been reported from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that the *Ḥaram* as a whole is the "Station of Ibrāhīm." Probably he meant that the two *rak'ahs* of the *Salāh* which this verse enjoins upon us to offer near the "Station of Ibrāhīm" after completing *tawāf* (circumambulation) of the Ka'bah, may be offered anywhere within the precincts of the *Ḥaram*, and that the prayers thus offered would be quite valid. Most of the *Fuqahā'* accept this view.

The *Maqam* of Ibrāhīm

(4) As to the commandment for making "the Station of Ibrāhīm" a place of offering one's prayers, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has explained it through his own words and actions on the occasion of his last Ḥajj. After completing the *tawaf*, when he reached "the Station of Ibrāhim," placed some yards away from the Ka'bah, he recited this very verse, and then offered two *rak'ats* on the other side of this stone, with his face turned towards the Ka'bah (Muslim). The *Fuqahā'* have inferred from this the rule that if one does not get the room to stand close to "the Station of Ibrahim," one may, while offering prayers, validly stand at any distance from it that one can, so long as the Ka'bah, as well as "the Station of Ibrāhim," is in front of him.

(5) This verse shows that it is necessary (*Wajib*) to offer two *rak'ahs* after the *tawāf* of the Ka'bah. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī) But offering these prayers specifically behind the "Station of Ibrāhim" is a *Sunnah* (the Way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ). There is, however, no bar on offering these prayers at any other spot within the *Ḥaram*, for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has been reported to have offered them near the gate of the "House of Allah", as did the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, too (al-Jaṣṣāṣ). In his "Al-*Manāsik*", Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī says that if one is not, for some reason, able to offer these necessary (*Wājib*) prayers behind "the Station of Ibrāhīm," as required by the *Sunnah*, he may validly offer them anywhere he possibly can within the *Ḥaram*, or even outside. In fact, this is exactly what happened to Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی الله عنها , one of the wives of the

Holy Prophet ﷺ . On the occasion of her Last Hajj, she could not find the opportunity to offer these *Wājib* prayers inside the *Ḥaram*, and was able to do so when she was outside the city of Makkah itself. Most of the *Fuqahā'*, except Imām Mālik, hold the view that if circumstances compel one to offer these prayers outside the *Ḥaram*, one is not required to make an animal sacrifice by way of compensation.

(6) The divine command to طَهِّرَابَيْتِيَ : "Keep My House clean" includes purifying it from physical and external dirt as much as from internal filth like infidelity (*Kufr*) and association (*Shirk*), and from impurities like greed, lust, envy, pride, vanity, hypocrisy, etc. Then, the use of the expression "My House" indicates that the commandment applies to mosques in general, for all the mosques are "the Houses of Allah", as the Holy Qur'ān itself has said فِيْ بُيُوْتٍ اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ : "In houses which Allah has commanded to be raised up" (24:36). Al-Qurṭubi reports that the Second *Khalīfah* 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once heard a man shout in the mosque, and rebuked him for having forgotten where he was. That is to say, one should pay due respect to a mosque, and refrain from speaking loudly, and, above all, from saying something which the *Sharī'ah* has forbidden. In short, just as the *Ḥaram* must be kept clean from all kinds of dirt and filth, external and internal, so must every mosque. Those who enter a mosque must keep their bodies and their clothes free from dirt, filth and even from bad smells, and also keep their hearts free from *Shirk*, hypocrisy, pride, malice and greed etc. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has asked the people not to enter a mosque, if they have just eaten raw onion or garlic, and has also forbidden very small children and mad men to enter a mosque for fear of their polluting it.

(7) The verse shows that "the House of Allah" is meant for people to make *tawaf* of the Ka'bah, to do *I'tikāf* (to seek a retreat for worship and meditation), and to offer their prayers. In the case of those who come from outside to perform the Ḥajj, the *ṭawāf* carries greater merit than offering prayers. Lastly, the verse makes it clear that it is absolutely permissible to offer one's prayers inside the "House of Allah", whether the prayers are *farḍ* (obligatory) or *nafl* (supererogatory) (Jaṣṣāṣ).

Verses 126 - 128

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا بَلَدًا اٰمِنًا وَّارْزُقْ اَهْلَهٗ مِنَ
الثَّمَرٰتِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ
فَاُمَتِّعُهٗ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ اَضْطَرُّهٗٓ اِلٰى عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ O
وَاِذْ يَرْفَعُ اِبْرٰهِمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ
مِنَّا اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ O رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ
وَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَآ اُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَاَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا ع
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ O

And when Ibrāhīm said, "My Lord, make this a city of peace, and provide its people with fruits - those of them who believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said, "And the one who disbelieves I shall make him enjoy a little, then I shall drag him to the punishment of the Fire. And an evil end it is! And when Ibrahim was raising up the foundations of the House, along with Ismā'īl: "Our Lord accept from us! Indeed, You - and You alone - are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing! And, our Lord, make us both submissive to You, and of our progeny a people submissive to You. And show us our ways of Pilgrimage and accept our repentance. Indeed, You - and You alone - are the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful." (Verses 126 - 128)

The prayers of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام always carried out the commandments of Allah without losing a moment, and was ready to make all kinds of sacrifices in His way, whether they involved worldly goods, or wife and children, or his own likes and dislikes. All the same, having affection and love for one's family is not only a natural urge in man, but also a divine commandment. This is what manifests itself in the present verses, where we find him praying for the well-being of his family in this world as much as in the other.

The prayer begins with the word *Rabb*, which lexically signifies "One who gives nurture." Thus, it teaches us the proper mode of praying to Allah, for this form of address in itself draws the mercy and

grace of Allah on the man who is praying. The first thing Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام prayed for was that Allah may turn the barren desert where he had left his family under divine commandment, into a city, so that his wife and son should not feel lonely, and that their daily needs should be easily satisfied. The same prayer occurs in Sūrah "Ibrāhīm" (14:35), but employs the construction *Al-balad* ("the city"), while the present verse employs *Baladan* ("a city"). The difference probably arises from the fact that the prayer reported here was made when the place was still a desert and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام wished "a city" to grow in this barren land, while the prayer reported in Surah "Ibrāhīm" was made when "the city" had already risen and was quite well-known, for near the end of the same Sūrah we find him saying اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ وَهَبَ لِیْ عَلَى الْكِبَرِ اِسْمٰعِیْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ : "Praise be to Allah who has given me, in my old age, Ismā'īl and Isḥāq" (14:39), which suggests that the second prayer was made after the birth of Sayyidnā Isḥāq (Isaac عليه السلام), an event that occurred thirteen years after the birth of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (Ishmael عليه السلام). (Ibn Kathīr)

Coming back to the verse under discussion, we see that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also prayed for this city to be made "a place of peace" - that is to say, safe from slaughter and plunder as from calamities, and secure against the domination of the infidels. The prayer was granted. Makkah became a thriving city, which is now a place of pilgrimage for Muslims who come to it in millions every year. It also became safe and secure, for no infidel has ever been able to conquer it or dominate over it. The Holy Qur'ān itself narrates the story of "*Aṣḥāb al-Fil*" ("the People of the Elephant") who were destroyed for having ventured to invade Makkah. The city has also been safe from slaughter and plunder. Even before the advent of Islam, the Arabs in the Age of Ignorance, for all their deviation into infidelity and association, deeply respected the Ka'bah and its environs as a matter of their creed - in spite of being vengeful, they would never take their revenge so long as the enemy remained within the precincts of the *Ḥaram*. In fact, the inhabitants of Makkah themselves were respected throughout Arabia, and the trading caravans passing to and fro between Makkah and Syria or Yemen were never interrupted. Allah has given security even to birds and animals inside the *Ḥaram*, and

forbidden all kinds of hunting within this area. So, even birds and animals distinctly show a feeling of security inside the *Ḥaram*, and are not scared of men. The sanctity of the place was emphasised and enforced by Islam even further. As for the slaughter which took place in the *Ḥaram* at the hands of Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf or the *Qarāmitah*, it was the work of those who called themselves Muslims, and not an invasion by infidels. If a man chooses to set fire to his own house, it does not falsify the general rule of the security provided to it against outsiders. Moreover, incidents like these have been very rare since the days of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and, then, we also know the dreadful fate of those who had dared to pollute "the House of Allah." In short, Allah has, in answer to his prayer, made the city so secure that even the *Dajjāl* (Anti-Christ) shall not have the power to enter it.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had also prayed for the people of Makkah to be provided with fruits. The surrounding land was uncultivable, but, in answer to the prayer, Allah made the neighbouring city of Tāif very fertile and productive in fruits, which started coming to Makkah. According to certain traditions of the Israelites, Tāif was originally situated in Syria, but was transferred to the present locality by the Archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام under divine command.

The Ibrahimic wisdom

One may also notice that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not pray for the land of Makkah to be made fertile, but suggested in his prayer that the fruits might come to Makkah from somewhere else as an import. He probably intended that his descendants should not get unduly absorbed in agriculture, for his purpose in founding the settlement was that his people لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ : "should be steadfast in the prayers." In other words, he wanted the essential function of his descendants to protect "the House of Allah" and to engage themselves in acts of worship. Otherwise, he could have prayed for Makkah itself to be made fertile, and Allah would have granted the prayer as easily.

The point becomes all the more clear if we consider the word *Thamarāt* (plural of *Thamarah* - "fruit"). This word appears in the same context again in another verse يُجْبٰى إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ: "the fruits of all kinds of things are drawn towards it (the city)" (28:57). If it is the

fruits of trees that are intended here, the word "*Yujbā*" ("drawn") is a sufficient indication that in granting the prayer Allah had not promised to produce them in Makkah itself, but to send them to the city from other places. On the other hand, the verse does not speak of "the fruits of all kinds of trees", but of "the fruits of all kinds of things." Obviously, the intention is to generalize the sense of "fruits" - a word which in common idiom implies the product obtained from a thing or an activity. The word should, then, cover not only the fruits of trees, but also the products of all kinds of crafts and industries in fact, all that is needed to sustain human life. Now, everyone can see for himself that Makkah possesses neither agriculture nor industry, and yet enjoys the benefits of these as much as any prosperous city in the world.

Verse 126 also provides an example of the rectitude of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . The first phrase of his prayer for the well-being and prosperity of the people of Makkah seems to suggest that he wished to include the infidels as much as the faithful. But earlier when he had prayed for all his descendants without making any distinction between the faithful and the infidels (as reported in Verse 124), Allah had answered that the prayer would be granted in the case of the faithful, but not in the case of the unjust - that is, *mushrikīn* (associators). On that occasion, he had prayed for the position of *Imāmah* (leadership). But the fear of Allah and the solicitude for being totally obedient to Him was so deeply ingrained in the heart of "the Friend of Allah" that even in praying for the prosperity of his people the earlier proviso came to his mind, and he at once added a rejoinder to the effect that he was praying only for the faithful. Allah was pleased with his rectitude, and told him that the worldly prosperity would be given to the disbelievers too, but that in the other world the faithful would be the only ones to prosper, while the disbelievers would receive nothing more than the punishment due to them.

Verse 127 shows another essential quality of this great prophet. In obedience to Allah, he had left the fertile land of Syria and made his wife and child to settle in the barren desert, and now he was taking up the labour of building "the House of Allah." This was a moment when a man who had been bearing such hardships in the way of Allah could

normally be expected to feel satisfied with himself and relax in a mood of self-congratulation. But "the Friend of Allah" recognized the Majesty of Allah, and knew that no creature can possibly worship or obey his Creator as is His due, but within his own limited powers. Consequently, he also knew that in performing the hardest or the greatest tasks one should not be proud of one's attainment, but should, in all humility, pray to Allah to accept the little effort one has been capable of making - and that, too, with the grace of Allah Himself. That is exactly what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did when he started, along with his young son, to build the Ka'bah. That is to say, he prayed to Allah to accept this deed, for Allah hears all prayers, and knows the intentions of His creatures.

Verse 128 reports that he further prayed to Allah "to make" him and his son obedient to His commandments and to His Will. This prayer too proceeds from the same sense of fear and awe, and from the same knowledge. He has, all his life, been performing exemplary deeds of obedience, and yet he prays to "be made" obedient. It is so, because the more one grows in one's knowledge of Divine Majesty, the more one comes to realize that one is not being faithful and obedient as is due.

It is significant that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام included his descendants too in his prayer. This shows that the "men of Allah" who never hesitate in sacrificing themselves and their children in the way of Allah, yet love them deeply. All the same, they know what the proper requirements of parental love are, and how they should be fulfilled. This is something beyond the reach of average men, who suppose the well-being of their children to reside in physical health and comfort alone, and spend all their love and care on providing just this to their family. But those who have received the favour of Allah show a much greater solicitude for the spiritual well-being of their children than for the physical, being more anxious as to what happens to them in the other world than in this. So, the great prophet prayed to Allah to make a group from among his descendants fully obedient to Him. This prayer aims at another advantage as well. Experience tells us that if those who enjoy a respectable position in their community,

and their descendants keep to the right path, they are naturally held in esteem, and their conduct inspires others to reform themselves. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ) Allah heard this prayer too, and among the descendants of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام there has always been a group of people obedient to Allah and firm in the Straight Path. Even in the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*) when the whole world, and Arabia in particular, was lost in the darkness of idol-worship and *Shirk*, there still remained some men from among his descendants who had faith in the One God, who believed in the other world, and were obedient to Allah - for example, Zayd ibn 'Amr bin Nufayl, and Quss ibn Sā'idah. It has also been reported that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim, the grand-father of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , shunned idol-worship and *Shirk*. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

We might add an explanatory note about the word *Manāsik* (the plural of *Mansik*) which occurs in Verse 128. This word signifies the different actions involved in the performance of the Ḥajj, and also the different places where the rites are performed - like *'Arafah*, *Muzdalifah* or *Minā*. Both the meanings of the word are intended here, and the substance of the last part of the prayer is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm wanted the rites of the Hajj to be explained and their locations to be indicated. The verb which has been employed in this connection is *Arina* - "show us." Now, seeing is done through the eyes, and also through the heart. So, the different locations of the rites were shown to him through the Archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام , and the injunctions regarding the Hajj were explained in detail.

Verse 129

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

And, our Lord, raise in their midst a Messenger from among them, who should recite to them Your verses, and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and make them pure. Indeed You, and You alone, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. (Verse 129)

The prayer of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Let us start by commenting on certain words which occur in this verse. The Arabic word *Yatlū* (translated in English as "recite", or "read out") comes from the word *Tilāwah*, (تلاوة) which lexically signifies "to follow, to obey", but in the terminology of the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* denotes the recitation or reading of the Holy Qur'ān or of a Divine Book, for one who reads a Divine Book is also required to obey it fully. The word also suggests that it is obligatory to read the Holy Qur'ān exactly as it has been revealed by Allah, and not to add or subtract a word on one's own part, not even to change the pronounciation of a word which often may, in the Arabic language, change the very meaning of the word concerned. In his "*Mufradat al-Qur'ān*", Imām al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says that the word *Tilāwah* cannot, in current idiom, be applied to the reading of any book other than the Word of Allah.

The word *Kitāb* (Book) in this verse, of course, refers to the Holy Qur'ān itself. As to the word *Ḥikmah* (usually translated in English as "wisdom"), it carries various meanings in Arabic - for example, arriving at the truth, justice, exact knowledge, etc. (al-Qamus). According to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, when the word is used in speaking of Allah, it connotes the total and perfect knowledge of all existents, and flawless creation; but when applied to someone other than Allah, it connotes a proper knowledge of the existents, and good deeds. In connection with the present verse, Maulanā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan has interpreted the word as "profound truths, or subtle realities", while Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has taken it to mean "the art of understanding properly". The commentators from among the blessed Companions and their immediate successors, whose interpretations come directly from the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, have advanced different connotations of the word *Ḥikmah* - some say that it refers to the commentary and exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, others believe that it means the proper understanding of the religion (*Dīn*), or the injunctions of the Sharī'ah, or such commandments of Allah which have been received through the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . But the truth of the matter is that in spite of the apparent variety of expressions used, the substance of all these statements is the same -

namely, the Way (*Sunnah*) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the *Ḥadīth*. This is the interpretation reported from Qatādah by Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Jarīr.

Commentary

Now, to proceed with the commentary, let us consider why Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , in praying for the well-being of his descendants in this world and in the other, requested Allah to send a prophet from among them. The reason is twofold. Firstly, the appearance of a prophet from among them would in itself be an honour and a blessing. Secondly, the prophet being a member of their own group, they would be thoroughly familiar with his past and present and with his ways, and thus find it easy to have trust in him, and to profit from his guidance. According to a *ḥadīth*, in accepting this prayer Allah promised that this prophet would be sent in the last of all ages. (Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr)

According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Imām Aḥmad in his "Musnad", the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that Allah had chosen him as the Last Prophet at a time when Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was not yet born and only his clay was being prepared, and that he was the manifestation of the prayer of his father, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , of the good tidings brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus Christ عليه السلام), and of the dream seen by his mother. The good-tidings refer to the announcement made by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام , as reported in the Holy Qur'ān:

مُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ

"I have brought the good-tidings of a prophet who is to come after me, and his name is Aḥmad." (61:6)

And the mother of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had, during her pregnancy, seen in a dream that a light went out of her which illumined the places in far-off Syria. Then, the words of the present prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام have been repeated in two different places in the Holy Qur'ān - once in Sūrah "'Al'Imrān" (Ch.3) and then in Sūrah "Al-Jumu'ah" (Ch. 62). Both the passages where these words have been repeated speak of the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ , and thus show that he is the prophet whom Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had prayed for.

All these verses - namely, the present verse from Sūrah "Al-Baqarah", and the other two from Sūrah "'Al-'Imrān" and Sūrah "Al-Jumu'ah" respectively - say the same thing about the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the same words. That is to say, they define the purpose of his being sent to the world as the Messenger of Allah and his functions as a prophet. These functions are threefold. Firstly, to recite the verses; secondly, to teach the Book and also to teach "wisdom"; and thirdly, "to purify" the people. Now, let us examine the three in detail.

(1) The verse speaks separately of "reciting" the Holy Qur'ān and of "teaching" it. Since "reciting" pertains to the words, and "teaching" to their meanings, the explicit distinction between the two shows that the words of the Holy Qur'ān are no less important in themselves and for themselves than their meanings, and that the recitation and preservation of the words is obligatory, and constitutes an act of worship. In order to understand this aspect of the question we have only to recall that the first and immediate listeners and disciples of the Holy Prophet ﷺ not only knew Arabic very well but were themselves very eloquent speakers of the language, some of them being even poets. For an audience like this it should have apparently been enough to recite the Holy Qur'ān, without any explanation or commentary, for them to be taught - in their case, the "reciting" and the "teaching" should have, for all practical purpose, become one and the same thing. Why has the Holy Qur'ān, then, mentioned them separately as two distinct prophetic functions?

If one considers the question seriously, one can easily draw two important conclusions. To begin with, one would come to see that the Holy Qur'ān is not like other books where meanings are the ultimate object, while words have only a secondary place as being no more than a vehicle for the ideas, and can hence tolerate minor changes and modifications so long as the meaning does not suffer. In the case of man-made books, it would thus be totally frivolous to go on reading the words without paying any attention to the meanings. On the contrary, in the case of the Holy Qur'ān the words are in themselves as necessary and inalienable a part of the intention as the meanings, and the Sharī'ah has laid down particular injunctions with regard to the words of the Holy Qur'ān. That is why in the Science of the Principles

of Islamic Jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*) the Holy Qur'ān has been defined as comprehending words and meaning both. In other words, if the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān are expressed in a different language, or even if certain other Arabic words are substituted for the revealed ones, such a version shall not be entitled to the name "Qur'ān", in spite of the meanings being intact. Consequently, if one were to recite this modified version in *Salāh*, one's prayers shall not be valid. Similarly, a reading of this version shall not bring one the reward promised in the *Ḥadīth* for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, nor shall any of the injunctions related to the Holy Qur'ān apply to it. Hence the *Fuqahā'* have forbidden the printing and publication of a translation of the Holy Qur'ān without the Arabic text. It is quite wrong to speak of an "Urdu Qur'ān" or "English Qur'ān", simply because a translation of the original into any language whatsoever cannot properly be called "the Qur'ān".

In short, the word *Yatlū* in the present verse leaves no doubt as to the fact that the "recitation of the verses" is an end in itself, for one does not "recite" meanings, but words. Of course, it goes without saying that Allah has sent the Holy Qur'ān for us to understand it and to follow its guidance. To be content with memorizing the words alone and being indifferent to the meanings would merely show one's ignorance of the nature of the Book of Allah, and one's ungratefulness. But there are so many people these days who suppose that the Holy Qur'ān is like other books, and believe that it is a waste of time to read or memorize its words without knowing what they mean. In view of this wide-spread error, we cannot insist too much on the truth that the recitation of the words of the Holy Qur'ān is in itself a regular act of worship and brings a great reward.

This is borne out by the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions. They knew the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān as no one else can, and yet they never thought that once they had understood it and acted upon it, nothing more was required of them. On the contrary, they kept reciting the Holy Qur'ān again and again as long as they lived. Some of the Companions used to recite the whole Book of Allah in a single day, some in two days, and some in three. Reciting the Holy Qur'ān in one week has always been quite a

usual practice among the Muslims, which is indicated by the division of the Holy Qur'ān into seven stages (*Manāzil*). In fact, by instituting the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān as an act of worship, carrying a reward of its own, and by giving it a separate and regular position among the prophetic functions, Allah has been very merciful to those Muslims who are not for some reason yet able to understand the meanings, and has saved them from the misfortune of being indifferent to the words and thus being totally deprived of the blessings which flow from His Book. Even such Muslims should, no doubt, keep trying to understand the meanings too so that they may receive the blessings in full, and the ultimate purpose of the Revelation may be realized.

(2) According to the present verses, "teaching the Book" is a prophetic function distinct from "reciting the Verses". We can easily infer from it the principle that in order to understand the Holy Qur'an it is not sufficient merely to know the Arabic language, but that it also requires the "teaching" of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . As every one knows, in order to learn a science or art - be it medicine or engineering, or something as ordinary as cookery - it is not enough to read a book or to be proficient in a language. Had it been the only qualification required, one could have easily mastered all the sciences and the arts on which one could find books written in the language one knew. To learn the meanest craft, then, one needs the regular and constant guidance of a teacher. This being so, how can one hope to understand, unaided, the Holy Qur'ān which has something to say on the most difficult subjects possible, ranging from theology to philosophy and physics? Had a competence in the Arabic language been sufficient for this task, scores of Jewish and Christian scholars and men of letters in the Arabic countries today would have been counted among the greatest commentators as would have been Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . By distinguishing "the teaching of the Book" from "the reciting of the verses" as a distinct prophetic function, the Holy Qur'ān has underlined the fact that in order to understand the Book of Allah properly it is not enough, even for those who know Arabic very well, merely to listen to a recitation of the verses, but that such an understanding can be acquired only through the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and that to separate the one from

the other, and to make an attempt at interpretation on one's own is no more than a self-delusion. Had it not really been necessary to explain and teach the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān, why should have Allah sent us a Messenger? There were many other ways of conveying His Book to men. But Allah knows everything, and is All-Wise. He knows that an understanding of His Book depends on the guidance of a teacher much more than that of human sciences and arts does - in fact, on the guidance, not of an ordinary teacher, but of one who in his turn receives guidance from Allah Himself directly through Revelation (*Waḥy*), and who is designated in Islamic terminology as a *Nabiyy* (Prophet) and a *Rasūl* (Messenger of Allah). According to the Holy Qur'ān itself, Allah has sent the Holy Prophet ﷺ to men for the express purpose of explaining to them in detail the injunctions and the meanings of the Divine Book - لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ : "So that you should explain to men what We have revealed for them". (16:44)

According to the present verse, the prophetic function of "teaching the Book" also includes the "teaching of *Ḥikmah*". As we have shown above, although this word carries various meanings in the Arabic language, yet, with reference to this verse and similar ones, the blessed Companions and their immediate successors have interpreted *Ḥikmah* as "the *Sunnah*" or the Way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It means that along with "teaching the Book" the prophetic functions include the teaching of the principles and modes of spiritual discipline. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself said, إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ مُعَلِّمًا :"I have been sent only as a teacher." From this, it necessarily follows that his followers are required to be disciples, and that every Muslim, man or woman, should as a Muslim be a life-long student, keen to learn what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has taught. If one cannot for some reason master the different sciences connected with the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, one must try to acquire at least a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the basic doctrines of Islam and of the fundamental injunctions of the Sharī'ah which are absolutely indispensable for every Muslim.

(3) "Purifying the people" is also an essential prophetic function. The Arabic word *Tazkiyah* denotes purifying a thing or person from all kinds of filth, internal as well as external. One can see for oneself what the different kinds of external filth are - the Sharī'ah has clearly

defined them. The internal varieties include, on the one hand, false beliefs like infidelity (*Kufr*), association (*Shirk*), or total reliance on some one other than Allah, and, on the other hand, pride, vanity malice, jealousy, love of worldly things, etc. Although the evil nature of such beliefs and tendencies has been fully explained in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, yet in making "the purification of the people" a distinct and separate prophetic function the present verse indicates that just as a mere knowledge of words and technical terms does not make one the master of a science or art, in the same way a knowledge, or even a proper understanding of its principles does not by itself make one perfect in the science or art concerned. To attain any degree of perfection one must also learn to put the principles into practice, and "realize" them in oneself and for oneself, which again requires the supervision of an authentic teacher and guide. In the Way of Sūfīs (*Tarīqah*) the function of the spiritual guide (*Shaykh*) is to help the disciple in obeying the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* so thoroughly that it becomes a matter, not of effort, but of habit - so to say, his very "nature". [36]

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36. At this point, we must sound a note of warning. It has grown, in our day, almost habitual to speak of Islam as "the religion of action" - if not of "activism". In such phrases, the implication is never absent that "action" is to be considered as an anti-thesis of "thought", and "practice" as that of "theory" - as if there is a dichotomy, and the two activities can hardly be reconciled with each other. And there is always the insinuation that in order to be worthy of any respect one must make an either/or kind of choice in favour of "action" and "practice" as against "thought" and "theory".

Such formulations are no older than four centuries, and are the necessary products of certain dilemmas which historically arose in the society of the Christian West. They do not and cannot, as such, belong to a religious or metaphysical approach to things. In so far as an activity can be described as specifically "human", it cannot be purely automatic, but is preceded by thought. In other words, all "practice" is governed by a "theory", and all "action" guided by "thought" or some principle, good or bad. The rule is so general that it applies even to the action of those who have been promoting the dichotomy. As far as the Islamic way of looking at things is concerned, it goes without saying that no action or practice, however good, can have the slightest merit or

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Now that we are on the subject of purification (*tazkiyah*), we might add another important consideration. From the days of the First Prophet to the days of the Last عليهم السلام , it has been the Way of Allah that in order to guide men and to show them the Straight Path, He has been sending them not only His Books but His prophets also. This indicates the general principle that for their guidance men need, on the one hand, a Divine Teaching revealed in the form of a Book, and, on the other, a human teacher in the form of a prophet who should train and discipline them into absorbing the divine guidance fully. Men need not merely one of these, but both. For, a man alone can be the teacher of another man, and not a book - which serves only as an aid. That is why Islam began with a Book and a Prophet, and the two, working together, produced a society of men who are unparalleled in history for their rectitude. For the coming generations too, the two basic principles of guidance have continued to function in the form of the Sharī'ah and "the Men of Allah". The Holy Qur'ān has emphasised the

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spiritual efficacy until and unless it carries a divine sanction. It logically follows that the foremost duty of a Muslim is to acquaint himself with divine commandments, and then to obey them. One can, if one likes, give to the first the name of "theory", and the second the name of "practice". But there is no dichotomy involved, nor any choice called for. No "practice" can be valid without being informed by "theory", and no "theory" can be of much avail without being put into "practice". It is "theory" which makes "practice" meaningful, and it is through "practice" alone that one acquires a true knowledge of "theory". They are not two entities, but only two ways of considering the same reality. What finally matters is "realization" - or making the essential truths "real" to oneself.

In the West itself, and as late as the end of the Middle Ages, there were people who knew that *theoria* and *praxis* went together in the terminology of spiritual disciplines. In fact, the Greek word does, in its original meaning, say all that we have been trying to explain here. For, even if "theory" in modern European languages has come to mean just a 'speculation', or a 'supposition', even a 'fancy', the Greek verb *theoreo* signified "to see", and the noun *theoros* denoted the "man who sees". Thus, *theoria* was not merely a fancy, but a truth which could be "seen", or actively realized.

point again and again. Let us quote a few instances: يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِينَ : "O believers, fear Allah, and be with the truthful"(9:119). In summing up the qualities of "the truthful" (*Al-Sādiqūn*), another verse ends with the words: أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ : "It is they who are truthful, and it is they who are the God-fearing". (2:177) As we have explained in our commentary on the first chapter, the Sūrah "Al-Fātiḥah" is the quintessence of the Holy Qur'ān, and the essence of this Sūrah is the guidance towards the Straight Path (*Al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*). Now, in order to indicate the Straight Path the Holy Qur'ān has, instead of calling it the Path of the Qur'ān or the Path of the Prophet or the Path of the *Sunnah*, spoken of the Men of Allah who can show the Straight Path to the seeker. Says the Holy Qur'ān: صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّينَ : "... the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who are misguided". (1:7) Another verse provides greater specification - فَأُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِينَ : "Those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace - the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous." (4:69) Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has, for the benefit of all the later generations of Muslims, explicitly named certain personalities who should be followed in religious matters: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسِ إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ مَا إِنْ أَخَذْتُمْ بِهِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا كِتَابَ اللّٰهِ وَعِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي : " I am leaving behind me two things; if you stand firm by them you will never fall into misguidance - firstly, the Book of Allah, and, secondly, my descendants and the members of my family." (Tirmidhī) A *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī says: اِقْتَدُوا بِالَّذَيْنِ مِنْ بَعْدِي أَبِي بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ "After me, follow Abū Bakr and 'Umar." And a third *ḥadīth* says: عَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِي وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ "You must adopt my way (the *Sunnah*) and the way of *Al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidīn*" - that is, the first four rightly-guided Caliphs.

In short, whether it be religion or the different sciences and arts, the acquisition of knowledge in the proper sense of the term depends on profiting from authentic books and authentic teachers. In the case of religion, however, people are, while turning to these two modes, liable to fall into the error of putting exclusive or excessive emphasis on one of them alone, which brings them more harm than good. Thus, there are, on the one hand, people who neglect the Book of Allah, and begin to adore their scholars and spiritual masters, without taking the

trouble of finding out whether they are obedient to the Sharī'ah or not. In fact, this has been the characteristic malady of the Jews and the Christians. Speaking of them, the Holy Qur'ān says: اتَّخَذُوٓا أَحۡبَارَهُمۡ وَرُهۡبَانَهُمۡ أَرۡبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللهِ : "They have taken their rabbis and their monks as their lords apart from Allah." (9:31) Obviously, this is the royal road to *Shirk* (association) and *Kufr* (infidelity), on which millions have perished, and go on perishing. On the other hand, there are people who claim that the Book of Allah is by itself sufficient for them, and that in order to understand it they do not need the guidance of a teacher or a scholar or a spiritual master. This too is a form of misguidance, for an attempt to interpret the Book of Allah on one's own, without the aid of reliable specialists, inevitably draws one into all sorts of errors, makes one a slave of one's own desires and inclinations, and may, in some cases at least, lead one straight outside the pale of Islam. So, what one is required to do is to put each of these two means of knowledge in its proper place, and to profit from both. One should be quite clear about the basic principle in this respect - to Allah alone belongs the authority to lay down a commandment, and it is Allah alone we have been called upon to obey, while the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a means of helping us to know how Allah is to be obeyed, and one obeys Him on the ground that to obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to obey Allah Himself. Besides that, one should, when faced with difficulties in understanding the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* or in acting upon them, turn for help, willingly and respectfully, to the words and deeds of the masters in these subjects, and consider it to be the key to the door of salvation.

There is a second conclusion to be drawn from the fact that the present verse includes the teaching of the Book among the prophetic functions. As we know, Allah has promised to safeguard the Holy Qur'ān Himself: إِنَّا نَحۡنُ نَزَّلۡنَا الذِّكۡرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُوۡنَ : "It is We who have revealed the Guidance, and it is We who watch over it." (15:9) Consequently, every single word, every consonant and every vowel of the Holy Qur'ān has remained intact upto this day, and shall remain intact as long the world lasts. Now, according to the present verse, the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is absolutely indispensable for a proper understanding of the Holy Qur'ān, and without this guidance it is not possible to act upon the Holy Qur'ān in a real sense. It logically

follows from it that the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ should also receive divine protection in their own degree, and remain intact as a whole till the end of the world; otherwise, the preservation of the words of the Holy Qur'ān would not, by itself, fully serve the purpose for which Allah has revealed it. It goes without saying that the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are identical with what is called the *Sunnah* or the *Ḥadīth*. Although Allah has not promised the same degree of protection to the *Ḥadith* as to the Holy Qur'ān, and the words of the *Sunnah* have not been preserved exactly in the same manner as the words of the Holy Qur'ān, yet the prophetic interpretations too must, according to the present verse, remain intact, and it has, taken as a whole, remained intact upto this day. Whenever an attempt has been made to distort a *Ḥadīth* or to invent spurious ones, the specialists in the science have always exposed the fraud.

Thus, in accordance with the prediction implicit in the present verse, Allah has preserved the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from the days of the blessed Companions to our own day through fully authentic collections of the *Aḥādith* and through the masters of this subject. And this divine protection shall continue to the last day of the world. For, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has assured us that in his *Ummah* there shall always remain till the end of the world a group of authentic scholars who shall jealously and watchfully guard the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* against all attempts at distortion or misrepresentation. This *ḥadīth* by itself gives the lie to some contemporary writers who have, for the ulterior motive of discrediting the injunctions of the Islamic Sharī'ah, been trying to propagate the notion that the whole body of the *Aḥādith* we possess is inauthentic and hence unreliable. But anyone who has eyes to see can easily understand the stratagem - if one cannot trust the *Ḥadīth*, one can no longer trust the text of the Holy Qur'ān. And this is exactly what the Westerners and their local allies want to accomplish - that is, to make the Muslims turn away from the Holy Qur'ān.

In the end, let us note that the three prophetic functions which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام referred to in his prayer, and which the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to perform, were fulfilled in his own life-time. In order to have an idea of the great transformation which

the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his purifying influence brought about in men, it is enough to see what the Holy Qur'ān says in praise of his Companions (رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین):

وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗۤ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرٰهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَّبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رِضْوَانًا

"Those who are with him are hard against the disbelievers, merciful to one another; you see them bowing and prostrating themselves (in prayers), seeking the bounty of Allah and His pleasure". (48:29).

Verses 130 - 132

وَمَنْ يَّرْغَبُ عَنْ مِّلَّةِ اِبْرٰهٖمَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنٰهُ فِى الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۝ اِذْ قَالَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗۤ اَسْلِمْ ۙ قَالَ اَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝ وَوَصّٰى بِهَآ اِبْرٰهٖمُ بَنِيْهِ وَيَعْقُوْبُ ؕ يٰبَنِىَّ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰى لَكُمُ الدِّيْنَ فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ۝

And who turns away from the faith of Ibrahim except the one who has debased himself in folly. And indeed We have chosen him in this world, and in the other world he is certainly among the righteous. When his Lord said to him, "Submit!" He said, "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds." And Ibrahim exhorted the same to his sons, and so did Ya'qub: "My sons, Allah has certainly chosen for you the Faith. So, let not death overtake you but as Muslims." (Verses 130 - 132)

The earlier verses have defined the basic principles of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhim علیہ السلام, called upon men to follow it, and warned them against the dangers involved in turning away from it. They have also refuted the claims of the Jews and the Christians to be the followers of this religion, while indicating Islam as the only religion which is now faithful to the Abrahamic Tradition, and which has, in its essentials, been the religion common to all the prophets. The present verses show the solicitude of the prophets علیہم السلام in giving religious and spiritual instruction and guidance to their descendants.

The Ibrahimic Way

Verse 130 speaks of the superiority of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , from which arises his own spiritual station and glory in this world and in the other. This being so, anyone who turns away from this religion only displays his own stupidity.[37] Anyhow, the point is that only he can turn away from this religion who does not possess any understanding, or has totally lost it, for this alone is the religion of "Nature", and no one can deny it so long as his "nature", in the essential and integral sense of the word, remains intact. The superiority of this religion is shown by the simple fact that Allah conferred a special honour on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in this world and in the next on account of this very religion. As for the honour and greatness he received in this world, everyone knows how *Namrūd* (Nimrod) with all his might failed to impress him, how he accepted gladly to be thrown into the fire rather than give up the worship of the One God, and how the Lord of the worlds changed the fire into a garden for him, so that believers and non-believers alike finally came to recognize his uprightness and his unalloyed faith. The associators of Arabia were, after all, his progeny, and had, in spite of their idol-worship, always continued to hold him in great esteem, and even claimed to be his followers. Certain remnants of his religion were still present among them, though somewhat distorted by their ignorance - for example, the Hajj, the annual sacrifice of animals, hospitality etc. These are the manifestations of the special divine grace which had designated "the Friend of Allah" (*Khalīlullāh*) as the '*Imām*' of people. (2:124) So much for his greatness in this world. As to the next, Verse 130 has announced the exalted station Allah has granted him in the Hereafter.

Verse 131 defines the basic principle of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . Allah asked him to submit himself, and he willingly and gladly agreed to submit himself to "the Lord of the worlds." Let us add that the word of command employed in this verse is *Aslim*, which

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37. Let us note that the relevant phrase in the Arabic text of this verse can be translated into English in three ways: (a) Such a man is stupid in himself (b) he has besotted himself, and allowed himself to become stupid (c) he is ignorant of his own self.

comes from the same root as the word Islam. It is difficult to find an exact English equivalent, for the word signifies "to obey, to submit oneself, to surrender one's will." Anyhow, we should notice that in reply to the divine command, he did not say, as one would have expected, أَسْلَمْتُ لَكَ : "I submit myself to you," but, more elaborately: أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ : "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds." This particular form of reply expresses the attitude of respect and awe proper to the occasion, and includes the praise of Allah which the moment of receiving the honour of divine address demanded. It also carries a recognition of the fact that in submitting himself to the Lord of the worlds he was only performing the essential duty of a servant towards the Master of All, and doing it for his own benefit. The reply makes it clear that the basic principle of the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , and its very essence is contained in one word, Islam, which signifies total obedience and willing submission of oneself to Allah. It was to show to the world his perfect adherence to this principle that he was made to pass through all the trials before attaining his exalted station. *Islām*, or submission to Allah, is what the world has been created for; it is the end all the prophets and all the divine books have been sent to serve.

We also learn from this verse that the religion common to all the prophets عليهم السلام and the point on which all of them come together is Islam. Beginning with Sayyidnā Ādam upto the Last Prophet ﷺ , every messenger of Allah and every prophet has called men to Islam alone, and enjoined upon his followers to keep to this Straight Path. The Holy Qur'ān is quite explicit on this subject: اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ عِنْدَاللّٰهِ الْاِسْلَامُ : "Certainly, in the eyes of Allah the only religion is Islam" (3:19) and وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ : "Whoso desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him." (3:85) In order to put the question in the proper perspective as also to avoid the risk of misunderstanding let us add a few remarks. All the religions which different prophets brought to the world had a divine sanction behind them, were essentially instituted by Allah Himself, and each of them was, in its own time, "accepted" in the sight of Allah. Consequently, each of these religions - whether one calls it Judaism or Christianity or something else - must in its essence be Islam, in the general sense of the word - namely, total submission to Allah.

But the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is distinguished from others by a peculiar characteristic - that is, he gave to his religion the name of Islam, and to his followers the name of Muslims. We have already seen in Verse 128 how he prayed for himself, his son and his progeny: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ: "And, our Lord, keep us both obedient (*Muslimayn*) to you, and make of our progeny a people (*Ummah*) obedient (*Muslimah*) to you." And now in Verse 132 we find him advising his descendants not to die without being sure that they have been Muslims. After him this distinction of being specifically called Muslims and "the Islamic *Ummah*" passed on, according to his own instruction, to the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Addressing the Muslims, the Holy Qur'ān says: مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّىٰكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِن قَبْلُ وَفِي هَٰذَا: "Be steadfast in the religion of your father, Ibrāhīm. He named you Muslims before this as well as in this (the Holy Qur'ān)." (22:78) When the Holy Qur'ān was revealed, the Jews and the Christians, and even the idol-worshippers of Arabia used to make the claim, each group on its own part, that they were the followers of the Abrahamic religion, but the Holy Qur'ān and its followers have made it quite evident that in this last phase of human history the religion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and this alone, is the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - the religion of quintessential "Nature" (*Al-fitrah*).

In short, the essence of all the divine books, all the Sharī'ahs and the teachings of all the prophets is Islam - that is, turning away from one's desires in order to obey divine commandments, and giving up individual opinion in order to submit oneself to divine guidance. But we are grieved to see that there are thousands of Muslims today, who have forgotten this basic truth, and wish to pursue their own desires in the name of Islam. What appeals to them is that kind of interpretation (rather, misinterpretation) of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* which should flatter their desires. In fact, what they strive to do is to distort the Sharī'ah to suit their fancies, and to do it so cleverly that the idols they really worship should appear in the garb of religion. Such men are, indeed, trying to be clever with Allah Himself who knows every particle of the universe and who can look into the deepest

recesses of the human heart - the Almighty before whom nothing avails but complete surrender and total submission.

What Islam requires of man is that he should set aside all his desires and inclinations, and seek, in everything he does, the pleasure of his Lord. And he can find this pleasure only when he knows the commandments of his Lord, and also performs these tasks exactly in the manner He has prescribed. This is what *'Ibādah* or worship is, in the real sense of the word. It is the perfection of this total obedience and submission and love which constitutes the final stage of man's spiritual development, which is known as the Station (*Maqām*) of *'Abdiyyah* (عَبْدِيَّة : Servanthood). This is the station where Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیه السلام received from Allah the title of *Khalīlullāh* (the Friend of Allah), and the Last of All the Prophets the title of عَبْدُنَا :*'Abduna* (Our Servant). On the subsidiary levels of the Station of Servanthood stand the *Abdal,* the *Aqtāl,* the *Awliyā,* the men of Allah - the 'saints' of the Islamic *Ummah*, each in his own degree. This is the essence of *Tawhid* (the realization of unicity), on attaining which all one's fears and hopes become bound with Allah, and with no one else.

Thus, Islam signifies total obedience to Allah, and this obedience is possible only when one follows the *Sunnah*, the Way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The Holy Qur'ān has laid down the principle in very explicit words:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ۝

"By your Lord, they will never be true Muslims till they make you the judge regarding the disagreements between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your verdict, and surrender themselves in full submission." (4:65).

In the end let us clarify an important point. As reported in Verse 132, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیه السلام made his descendants promise that before they died they should make sure that they had been Muslims. It means that one should steadfastly follow the teachings of Islam throughout one's life, so that one receives the grace of Allah and remains a Muslim upto the last breath. A number of *ahādith* too say that one would die in the state which one has maintained in one's life,

and one would, on the Day of Resurrection, rise from the grave in the same state. This is the usual way of Allah with men - if His servant makes up his mind to do good deeds and also strives in this direction as best as he can, Allah helps him and makes the task easy for him. This principle does not in any way stand in opposition to what has been said in another *ḥadīth* to this effect:-

> A man keeps doing the kind of good deeds for which Paradise has been promised and it seems that there is only an arms's length between him and Paradise, and then all of a sudden his destiny overcomes him, and he starts doing what would lead him to Hell, and finally he reaches Hell; on the other hand, a man keeps doing what would lead him to Hell, and it seems that there is only an arm's length between him and Hell, and then his destiny overcomes him, and he starts doing what would make him worthy of Paradise, and finally he enters Paradise.

We have said that there is no contradiction involved, for some texts of this *ḥadīth* mention a proviso too - "as it appeared to people." That is to say, the first of these two men appeared in the eyes of the onlookers to be performing good deeds, while in fact he was doing just the opposite; similarly, the second man had from the outset been doing what would make him worthy of Paradise, though people thought him to be a sinner. (Ibn Kathīr) We conclude this discussion with the remark that the man who has been steadfast in doing good deeds, should trust the divine promise, rely on the usual way of Allah with His creatures, and hope that through the grace of Allah he would depart from this world in this blessed state.

Verses 133-134

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ
مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلٰهَكَ وَإِلٰهَ اٰبَائِكَ إِبْرٰهِمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيلَ
وَإِسْحٰقَ إِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ۝ تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا
مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْئَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۝

Or were you present when death approached Yaqūb, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me"? They said, "We will worship your God and the God of

your fathers, Ibrāhīm, Ismā'il and Isḥāq, the one God, and to Him we submit ourselves." Those are a people who have passed away. For them what they earned, and for you what you earned. And you shall not be questioned as to what they have been doing. (Verses 133-134)

The previous verses have defined the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the essence of Islam. Now, these two verses bring before us another aspect of the question. Call it the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام or Islam, it is in any case meant for the whole world. Then why have the descendants of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليهم السلام been specifically mentioned here, and why should have these two great prophets been so particular in giving this counsel to their sons? We shall say that these specifications show that love for one's progeny and solicitude for their well-being is in no way incompatible with the station of prophethood or even with that of "the Friend of Allah." For, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام , who was, on one occasion, not only willing but happy to be sacrificing his son in obedience to the commandment of Allah, did on a different occasion pray for the well-being of his progeny in this world and the other, and wished, while departing from this world, to offer them what was the greatest blessing in his eyes - namely, Islam. Verses 132 and 133 suggest this very principle. So, even prophets love their children, the only difference being that while ordinary men consider the good things of this world alone to be worthwhile and wish to leave to their children as much of these as they can, in the eyes of the prophets and their genuine followers the only thing that counts is *Īmān* (faith) and good deeds - in one word, Islam - and it is this eternal wealth which they wish and strive to transmit wholly to their descendants.

This practice of the prophets provides a special guidance to parents: just as they are keen to secure the worldly comfort and happiness of their children, they should pay equal, if not greater, attention to the discipline of their external and internal behaviour according to the requirements of the Shari'ah. Is it at all reasonable that one should strain every nerve to protect one's children from the heat of the sun, but leave them exposed to the fire of Hell?

From this example of the prophets we also learn that it is the duty of the parents and the right of the children that one should first of all

take care of the spiritual health of one's own children, and worry about others only afterwards. This principle rests on three considerations. Firstly, one's children are, on account of the special relationship with the parents, likely to accept the counsel more easily and thoroughly than others, and may later on be of great help in the efforts which one makes in the service of Islam.

Secondly, the easiest and the most effective way of transmitting the Truth to a whole people is that the head of each family should take upon himself the responsibility of teaching and training the members of his family. Employing a current and popular term, we may say that this localized and decentralized method distributes the responsibility over a large number of individuals, and teaching the families separately amounts finally to teaching the society as a whole. The Holy Qur'ān itself has laid down the principle: يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ قُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا : "O believers, guard yourselves and your families against a Fire." (66:6) In fact, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself who is the Messenger of Allah for the whole of humanity and whose guidance shall remain valid upto the last day of the world, was commanded to convey the Truth first of all to the members of his family. Thus, the Holy Qur'ān says: وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ ٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ : "And warn your clan, your nearest kin." (26:214) and وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِٱلصَّلَوٰةِ وَٱصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا :"And bid your family to offer *Salāh*, and be regular in them yourself." (20:132) And the Holy Prophet ﷺ always fulfilled these commandments.

Thirdly, one can observe for oneself that if the close relations or the members of his family do not support a man in what he wishes to teach, or do not seem to be acting upon it, his teachings do not succeed so well with others. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ took upon himself the prophetic function, the usual reply of his listeners was that he should first convince his own clan, the Quraysh, before turning to others. But when his own clan accepted Islam and the process had been completed at the time of the conquest of Makkah, the world saw, as the Holy Qur'ān reports يَدْخُلُونَ فِى دِينِ ٱللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا : "People entering Allah's religion in throngs." (110:2)

The main reason for the ignorance and the indifference towards Islam which is wide-spread among the Muslims today, is that even when the parents themselves are good Muslims in every way, they

leave their children to themselves and let the social environment mould them in its own fashion. Their only worry is to see their children doing well in this world, and they never think of what will happen to them in the next. Let us pray that Allah, in His mercy, grant all of us the solicitude for the other world, and help us to make a genuine effort for acquiring the only wealth that can ever be: faith and rectitude!

Injunctions and related considerations

Verse 133 reports that the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) عليه السلام promised to worship إِلٰهَ اٰبَآئِكَ اِبْرٰهِيمَ وَ اِسْمٰعِيلَ وَ اِسْحٰقَ :"The God of your father, Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl and Isḥāq." This phrase indicates that the term "father" includes the grand-father as well. The blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has deduced from this verse the rule that in matters of inheritance the grandfather shall be treated like the father.

Verse 134 tells us that the good deeds of one's forefathers shall not suffice one, if one has not been performing good deeds oneself, and that, similarly, one shall not have to suffer for the misdeeds of one's forefathers, if one's own account is clean. It follows upon this principle that children of *mushrikīn* (associators) and *Kafirīn* (infidels), if they die before having come of age, shall not be punished in the other world on account of the disbelief of their parents. The verse also refutes the claim of the Jews that irrespective of what they had been doing they would go to Paradise on account of the good deeds of their forefathers.

Let this be a warning to those Muslims who, being the descendants of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or of a saint, delude themselves with the hope that their sins would go unpunished in consideration of this privileged position. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān is very explicit and very insistent on this point. For example:

وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ اِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى

"Each man shall reap the fruits of his own deeds, and no one shall bear the burden of another" (6:164).

Addressing his own clan, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

"Beware, O Banu Hashim, let it not be that on the Day of

Judgment while others bring their good deeds with them, you on your part, having neglected good deeds, bring with you only the trust in being my relations, and so I have to tell you that on that day, I cannot save you from the wrath of Allah."

Another *ḥadīth* says: من بطابه عمله لم يسرع به نسبه :"He who has been pulled back by his deeds cannot be pushed forward by his ancestry."

Verses 135 - 136

وَقَالُوْا كُوْنُوْا هُوْدًا اَوْنَصٰرٰى تَهْتَدُوْا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهٖمَ حَنِيْفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ○ قُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ النَّبِيُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ لَانُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ ○

And they said, "Become Jews or Christians, and you will find the right path." Say: "Instead, (we shall remain) the followers of Ibrāhīm, the upright, - and he was not one of the associators." Say (O, Muslims): "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us, and in what has been revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Iṣḥāq, Ya'qūb and his children, and in what has been given to Mūsā and 'Īsā (Jesus) and what has been given to the prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between any of them. And to Him we submit ourselves." (Verses 135 - 136)

The earlier verses have defined the religion (*Millat*) of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and established that its present form is Islam. Now, the Jews and the Christians, in spite of their pretension to be his followers, did not in actual fact follow his religion. Each of these two groups, instead of accepting Islam, used to ask the Muslims to accept its own religion in order to find true guidance. No doubt, each of these two religions was, in its own time and for its own time, a genuine religion, but in its present form each had become distorted, and had also been abrogated by Allah. So, in answer to them, Allah asks the Holy Prophet ﷺ to declare on his own behalf and on that of his followers that they are and shall remain steadfast in the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who shunned all kinds of association

(*Shirk*), who adored nothing but the One God and obeyed no one but Him, and whose religion, therefore, did not have even a trace of distortion. Then, in the second of these verses Allah asks the Muslims to declare the basic tenets of this religion too, which are as follows:- (1) Muslims believe in Allah and in the guidance which He has sent them through the Holy Prophet ﷺ . (2) They also believe in all the prophets Allah has sent from time to time - some of whom have been mentioned in this verse. (3) Some of the prophets may in some ways be superior to others, but it is essential for a Muslim to believe in all the prophets without making any distinction. (4) Muslims believe that the Sharī'ahs of all the prophets mentioned here were instituted by Allah Himself, but they have now been abrogated. So, Muslims follow the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , for this alone is now valid. (5) Muslims ultimately obey Allah alone, and submit themselves totally to Him.

In the second of these verses the progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob عليه السلام) has been described as '*Asbāṭ* or "tribes." The reason is that he had twelve sons, and the offspring of each son came to form a tribe. Allah so blessed his seed that in Egypt, Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph عليه السلام) and his brothers made up a group of twelve men, but their lineage flourished, and when the Israelites left Egypt along with Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses), their number ran into thousands. Another form of this blessing was that the progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام included a large number of prophets.

Verses 137 - 138

فَإِنْ اٰمَنُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَآ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا هُمْ
فِیْ شِقَاقٍ ۚ فَسَيَكْفِيْكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ○ صِبْغَةَ
اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ صِبْغَةً ۫ وَّنَحْنُ لَهٗ عٰبِدُوْنَ ○

So, if they believe in the like of what you believe in, they have certainly found the right path. And if they turn away, they are nothing but in antagonism. Then Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. The colouring of Allah! And who is better in colouring than Allah? And we are to worship none but Him. (Verses 137 - 138)

The definition of *'Īmān*

From the beginning of the Sūrah Al-Baqarah upto this place, different verses have been explaining the nature and essence *'Īmān* (faith), sometimes succinctly and sometimes in detail. Verse 137 defines *'Īmān* in a simple and short phrase which is at the same time so comprehensive that all possible details and explanations are inherent in it. The earlier verses having established that the only religion which is valid at present is Islam, this verse assures the Muslims that the Jews and the Christians can find the guidance only "if they believe just as you believe", or, in other words, "if they believe in what you believe in." The immediate addressees of the phrase "you believe" are the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions. Thus, in doctrinal matters above all, their *'Īmān* has been placed before us as a model, and the verse is essentially a divine commandment, laying down the fundamental principle that the only *'Īmān* acceptable to Allah is the one which was adopted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions, and that any doctrines or beliefs that deviate from it in the least are neither valid nor acceptable to Allah. That is to say, one should believe in Allah and His attributes, in the angels, in the Books of Allah, in the messengers and prophets of Allah and in their teachings exactly in the same manner as the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions did, without adding or substracting anything on one's own part and without advancing one's own interpretations or distorting the authentic meanings of the doctrines. Nor is one allowed to assign to the angels or the prophets a station higher or lower than the one assigned to them by the word or deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Moreover, one is also required to be sincere and pure in one's faith, for the contrary would amount to hypocrisy (*Nifāq*).

This explanation helps us to see in its true proportions the situation of the heterodox sects among the Muslims - of those who make tall claims as to the genuineness of their *'Īmān*, but do not possess *'Īmān* in the full sense of the term. As for that, even the idolators of Arabia used to proclaim the authenticity of their *'Īmān* as do the Jews and the Christians even today, and as do even the heretics in every age, but since their faith in Allah, in the prophets and the angels, and in the Day of Judgment etc. did not conform to the *'Īmān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , it was not acceptable to Allah and was summarily rejected.

To give a few examples, some of the associators of Arabia used to deny the very existence of angels, while others considered them to be the daughters of God. Some groups among the Jews refused to obey the prophets and were so hostile to them that they came to assassinate a number of them, while other groups among the Jews and the Christians began to revere the prophets so extravagantly as to identify them with God Himself, or to place them on the level of God or to consider them the sons of God. These two attitudes are the two extremes of deviation, and are clearly seen, in the light of this verse, to be only two forms of misguidance.

According to the Shari'ah, it is, of course, obligatory for every Muslim to respect and love the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and if one lacks in this respect and love, one cannot be said to possess *'Imān* in the true sense of the term; all the same, let it be clearly understood that it is misguidance and association (*Shirk*) to make him the equal of Allah with respect to an attribute like knowledge or power. For, according to the Holy Qur'ān, the essence of *Shirk* lies in making someone other than Allah the equal of Allah with respect to a divine attribute, as is indicated by this verse: إِذْ نُسَوِّيكُم بِرَبِّ الْعَٰلَمِينَ : "And when we used to make you equal of the Lord of the worlds." (26:98) There are some Muslims who consider the Holy Prophet ﷺ to be omniscient and omnipresent like Allah Himself, and, in doing so, congratulate themselves upon showing the respect and love which is required of a Muslim, while they are only disobeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ and going against his teachings. They should learn from this verse that the respect and love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ which Allah demands from a Muslim is only that kind of respect and love which his blessed Companions had for him - neither more nor less than this, for either would be a deviation and a sin.

The terms Ẓilli and Burūzi are not valid

On the other hand, there are people [like the group called the Qadiānīs or the Aḥmadīs of Lahore] who have been deying the unambiguous and clear declaration of the Holy Qur'ān that Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ is the last of all the prophets, and trying to make room for a new prophet. In order to serve this evil purpose, they have out of their own fantasy manufactured exotic forms of prophethood, and given to them equally fanciful names like *Burūz* (incarnation) or *Ẓill* (manifestation). The

present verse exposes this fraud as well, for the *'Imān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of his blessed Companions does not show any trace of a belief in prophets of this genre, and anyone who pretends to such a belief is an avowed heretic.

Similarly, there are people whose minds and hearts are so befogged in modern materialism and the so-called "rationalism" that they find it difficult to accept the idea of the other world and the things that pertain to it, and then try to subject them to crooked interpretations, which they suppose to be an effort to make Islam more acceptable to the modern mind, and hence a great service to Islam. But, insofar as these interpretations transgress the commandment indicated in this verse - that is to say, they do not conform to the *'Imān* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of his Companions رضی الله عنهم اجمعین - they are totally false, and must be rejected. It is obligatory for a Muslim to believe without demur in what the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* tell us with regard to the other world and all that pertains to it. For example, it is quite inadmissible to maintain that on the Day of Judgment men will be resurrected only "spiritually" and not bodily, or that the reward and the punishment in the other world will be "spiritual" and not physical, or that the "weighing of the deeds" is only a metaphorical expression. Let us insist once again that all such interpretations are doctrinally false and unacceptable to Allah - as the present verse has established.

Having defined the *'Imān* which is acceptable to Allah, Verse 137 also points out that the enemies of Islam may yet remain unconvinced out of sheer obstinacy and malice. Allah asks the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to worry about them, for Allah will deal with them Himself, and protect His prophet. This promise has been made more explicitly in another verse: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ : "And Allah will protect you against these people." (5:67) Subsequent events showed the fulfilment of this promise.

The Colour of Allah

Verse 138 delineates Islam as the "colouring of Allah", and explains this "colouring" as the unalloyed worship of Allah and total submission to Him. Verse 135 has identified Islam with "the religion of Ibrāhīm." If we put Verse 135 and 138 together, it becomes clear that essentially Islam - or any authentic religion, for that matter - is

the religion of Allah, and that the association of a religion with the name of a prophet can only be symbolised.

Verse 138 presents religion as "colouring" (*Ṣibghah*). The expression carries within itself several levels of meaning. But the immediate allusion is to a certain ceremony of the Christians. On the seventh day of its birth, they used to bathe an infant in coloured (probably yellow) water, which was supposed to be a substitute for circumcision, and a sufficient guarantee for the external and internal purification of the infant - the fast and indelible "colouring" of Christian faith, so to say. The verse suggests that this colour is wasted away with the water, without leaving a trace outside or inside, nor does this kind of baptism serve the purpose of circumcision and cleanse a man of physical impurity. And the verse declares that the only colouring worth the name is the colouring of a genuine and unabrogated religion - that is, Islam - the only colouring which can guarantee physical and spiritual purification, and the only one which shall remain. Then, the word *Ṣibghah* or "colouring" has a deeper meaning too. Just as a certain colour is openly and clearly visible to the beholder, the signs of genuine and pure *'Imān* should shine through the face, the movements, the habits and the behaviour of a Muslim. In this sense, the verse is a commandment, asking Muslims "to dye" themselves in the "colouring of Allah", outwardly and inwardly by offering unalloyed worship to Him alone, by submitting themselves totally to His commandments, and by gladly accepting His will.

Verse 139 - 141

قُلْ أَتُحَآجُّوْنَنَا فِي اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَآ أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ
أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُوْنَ ○ أَمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ إِنَّ إِبْرٰهٖمَ
وَإِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَإِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوْا هُوْدًا أَوْ نَصٰرٰى
قُلْ ءَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ
اللّٰهِ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ○ تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا
مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْئَلُوْنَ عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ○

Say: "Would you argue with us about Allah, when He is

our Lord as well as your Lord? For us our deeds, and for you your deeds! And to Him we are faithful. Or, would you say that Ibrāhim Ismā'il, Iṣhāq, Ya'qūb and their children were Jews or Christians?" Say: "Do you know better or does Allah?" And who can be more unjust than the one who conceals the testimony he has from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do. Those are a people who have passed away. For them what they earned, and for you what you earned. And you shall not be questioned as to what they have been doing. (Verses 139 - 141)

These three verses bring to an end the section of the Sūrah in which certain claims of the Jews and the Christians have been refuted -- for example, their assertion that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (Ishmael), Sayyidnā Ishāq (Isaac), Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) and the prophets in his lineage -- عليهم السلام -- were either Jews or Christians, and the claim that they were the chosen people and would have the exclusive privilege of being sent straight to Paradise which would be denied to Muslims. The earlier verses have established that the religion of all these prophets was Islam, in the general sense of the term, but that the earlier Sharī'ahs have now been abrogated, and the title of "Islam" been specially given to the religion of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ . Should the Jews and the Christians still continue, in their stubbornness, to deny, Allah asks the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims to declare in plain and simple words that Allah, being the Lord of All, cannot show any special favour to any particular group of His creatures, and that on the Day of Judgment He will assess the Jews and the Christians as well as the Muslims according to what each has believed in and how each has been behaving - a principle which was accepted by the People of the Book too. The Muslims have also been asked to announce that they on their part recognize no other god but Allah, and have purified their religion of all traces of association (*Shirk*) - as against the Jews and the Christians who consider Sayyidnā 'Uzayr (Ezra عليه السلام) and Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) respectively to be "the Son of God", and whose religions have, moreover, been abrogated. In this respect at least, Muslims have a superiority over them. If the People of the Book should, on account of their affiliation with the earlier prophets, still keep insisting on their

own rectitude, the Muslims may ask them a basic question - who knows the truth better, Allah or the People of the Book? Allah has definitely and finally announced the truth in the Last Revelation, and the People of the Book themselves know that the religion of the earlier prophets was Islam. Yet they are trying to conceal the truth, and being unjust, in the gravest sense of the term. Allah knows what they have been doing, and will judge them according to their own deeds, and not according to the deeds of their ancestors. Thus, at the end of this section, Verse 141, which is a repetition of Verse 134, warns them against the consequences of their vanity and pretentiousness, and advises them to take care of themselves rather than relying on ancestral glory.

Verse 139 brings out the essential and peculiar characteristic of the Islāmic *Ummah* - it has purified itself of all possible admixture of *Shirk* (association), and devoted itself, externally and internally, to Allah. The Arabic word in the text is *Mukhlisūn*, the plural of *Mukhlis* which signifies "one who has purified himself", and which is allied to the word *Ikhlāṣ*, "the act of purifying oneself." According to Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, *Ikhlāṣ* consists in worshipping no one but Allah, associating no one with Allah, and doing good deeds only for the sake of obeying Allah, and not for the purpose of winning the admiration of the people. Certain spiritual masters have said that *Ikhlāṣ* is a deed which can be identified neither by men, nor by angels nor by Satan, and that it is a "secret" between Allah and His servant. [38]

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38. The word *Ikhlāṣ* is usually rendered into English as "sincerity" and *Mukhlis* as "sincere." It is to be doubted whether the word "sincerity" did, at any time and in any Western language, carry the full gamut of the meanings of the Arabic word *Ikhlāṣ*. Anyhow, the sense of the word "sincerity" has, in current usage, become not only perverted but sometimes actually inverted. The word used to imply a harmony between external action and inner inclination, along with the tacit assumption that the external action concerned was, if nothing else, at least socially acceptable to some degree. But "sincerity", as employed in our days, suggests a compliance with one's emotions or even with one's instincts. As such, the concept of "sincerity" is being used to justify and authorize fornication, or even murder. It is easy to see that such an idea of "sincerity" is the exact anti-thesis of *Ikhlāṣ*. For, one cannot attain even the lowest degree of

Continued

Verse 142

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلّٰهُمْ عَنْ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِى كَانُوا
عَلَيْهَا ؕ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ؕ يَهْدِى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۝

The foolish among the people will say: "What has turned them away from their Qiblah which they used to observe?" Say: "To Allah belong the East and the West. He guides whom He wills to a straight path." (Verse 142) [39]

Continued

Ikhlāṣ without forming a clear intention to obey the injunctions of the Sharī'ah as against letting oneself be guided by one's instinctual urges or emotional inclinations while the concept of "sincerity" in vogue requires one to ignore the Sharī'ah or even mundane considerations and to do the bidding of one's impulse of the moment, thus reducing man to an automaton at the mercy of his reflexes. Nor should we forget another serious aspect of the problem. There is another allied notion of "sincerity" which has been disturbing the peace of many pious people even in the past, but which has acquired a devastating intensity in our own days. This notion of "sincerity" demands one to seek fixity and unrelieved continuity in an emotional state, which is, of course, not possible for man as he is constituted. It so happens with some pious people that once they start seeking this kind of "sincerity" in offering their enjoined prayers, they find that they cannot keep up an unbroken concentration of mind, and are so frightened by this lapse that they sometimes give up offering their prayers, believing such worship to be "insincere" and hence invalid. Let us make it clear once for all that the only thing the Sharī'ah requires from us is to have the correct intention and attitude when we begin our prayers or perform any other good deed. This alone is the pre-requisite for attaining *Ikhlāṣ*, which, anyhow, is not a matter of emotions and affective states. In short, Islam requires us to perfect the quality of *Ikhlāṣ* as defined by the Shari'ah, and not to seek "sincerity" in the Western sense of the term, ancient or modern. For an elaborate treatment of the subject, see *Tarbiyyah al-Sālik* by Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī .

39. Some of the considerations arising from this verse have already been dealt with under Verses 114 and 115. As one can see, the present verse deals with taunts of the enemies of Islam - Jews, Christians and the *mushrikīn* (associators) - with regard to the change of the Qiblah (orientation) for *Salāh* .

The orientation of Qiblah

"Qiblah" signifies the direction to which one turns one's face. It goes without saying that a true Muslim turns in every form of worship towards Allah alone, and Allah is not limited to any particular direction but transcends all dimensions. The logic of this fact requires that in worshipping Him everyone should be free to choose any orientation that he likes, and that he should have the allowance to keep changing his orientation as it suits him. But Divine Wisdom found it more in the fitness of things that all the worshippers should turn to the same direction, and have a fixed orientation. For, worship has several forms, some of which pertain to a single individual, while others have a collective aspect too. Among the first are included fasting, remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) etc. which can be performed in privacy, while the *Ṣalāh* and the Ḥajj are performed openly and in a congregation. The latter, beside being forms of worship, have a secondary function as well - that of providing a social and collective discipline to the Muslims. Obviously, the basic principle of social organization is the unity and integration of the individuals, on the firmness and solidity of which depends the strength of the social organization, whereas an improper emphasis on individuality encougages a disintegrating and fissiparous tendency.

As to what the principle of unity and integrity should be, different people have chosen different ways at different times. For example, some have adopted race or colour as the integrating principle, others have opted for the homeland or the geographical region, still others for language. But all these considerations are purely arbitrary and accidental; instead of bringing men together, they divide them, and produce, (as the newspapers show us every day) world-wide concussions. So, the revealed religions and the Sharī'ahs of the prophets عليهم السلام - the collective name for which is "*Islām*" - have not shown unnecessary regard to such arbitrary and accidental factors, but have, in determining the principle of integration and unity among men, established themselves on the only basis which can possibly be valid - that is, the unity of mind arising out of doctrinal unity.

In other words, Islam has called upon men not to become divided in the worship of a thousand false gods, but to join together in the

worship of the True God, the One, the Incomparable - the only worship which can draw men from the four corners of the world, men of the past, of the present and of the future, all into a single body of the Faithful. Then, in order to give this inner unity a visible form and also to reinforce it, certain external expressions of unity have also been prescribed. But in both the cases the basic principle has been that the unity in view should not be imposed by circumstances, but arise from an act of will and choice, and produce a spiritual brotherhood.

As to the accidental factors like race or colour or birth-place, Islam has given them their proper place in the social life of man, but has not allowed any of them to usurp the central position. It is only in the field where human will can exercise its power to choose that Islam has sought to establish unity among men, internal as well as external. Moreover, the consideration inherent in the relevant injunctions and regulations has been that the things which are to serve as the point of unity should be of such a nature that every human being - man or woman, literate or illiterate, townsman or rustic - can choose and adopt them with equal ease.

It is hence that the Islamic Sharīʿah has not imposed a single and rigid mode of dress or food or housing on all the peoples of the world, for, the climatic conditions and the needs and even the preferences of people living in different regions being different, such a uniformity would have made life difficult for them. Supposing that in making a certain form of dress obligatory, a certain minimum had been prescribed, such a regulation would, beside being inconvenient for some, have gone against the principle of moderation, and amounted to a rejection of Allah's bounties; on the other hand, if a more elaborate dress had been made compulsory, it would have been impossible for the poor to fulfil the conditions. So, instead of prescribing a uniform for all the Muslims, the Sharīʿah has permitted the different modes of dressing current among different peoples or regions, and has only laid down certain necessary restrictions - for example, the dress should cover a certain area of the body, specified separately for men and women; in choosing a particular form of dress one should avoid being prodigal or vain, nor should a dress be chosen for the sake of imitating non-Muslims.

In short, Islam has established as points of unity for the Muslims only such things as can be the objects of a free choice, are easy to adopt and do not entail undue hardship or expense - for example, keeping the ranks straight in congregational prayers; following the movements of the *'Imām* in such prayers strictly; adopting a single form of dress while performing the Ḥajj, etc.

Among these, one of the most important is the Qiblah or the orientation for the *Ṣalāh*. As we have said, Allah Himself is free of all dimensions whatsoever, but the establishment of a single and definite Qiblah provides an easy and concrete unifying principle for men. Now, had the matter of choosing a Qiblah been left to men to decide for themselves, it would in itself have become a cause of dissension and a conflict among them. So, it was necessary that a thing of such import be determined by Allah Himself. In fact, the angels had already laid the foundation of the Ka'bah, the House of Allah, even before Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was sent down to the earth. This was the first Qiblah of mankind.

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُّضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِىْ بِبَكَّةَ مُبٰرَكًا وَّهُدًى لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ O

"Certainly, the first House which was built for men is the one at Makkah - blessed, and a guidance for the worlds" (3:96).

As we have pointed out above in our commentary on Verse 125, this continued to be the Qiblah upto the time of Sayyidnā Nūh (Noah عليه السلام), when the Ka'bah was destroyed by the Deluge. It was rebuilt, under divine command, by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'il (Abraham and Ishmael عليهم السلام), and became their Qiblah. After that, the *Baytul-Maqdis* at Jerusalem was established as the Qiblah for the Hebrew prophets and their people. Even so, these prophets, according to Abū al-'Āliyah, used to offer their prayers in the *Baytul-Maqdis* in such a way that they should be facing not only the Rock (*Ṣakhrah*) but the Ka'bah also. (Qurṭubī)

When *Ṣalāh* was made obligatory for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Qiblah appointed for him was, according to some scholars, the Ka'bah which had already served as the Qiblah for his ancestor, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . Some time after the *Hijrah* (his migration from Makkah to Madīnah), or, as some scholars maintain, a little before

that event, he received a divine commandment to turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis*. (This particular commandment has not been reported in the Holy Qur'ān - a fact which shows the hollowness of the claim that the Holy Qur'ān can be fully understood without the help of the *Ḥadīth*.) According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī, he offered his prayers with the *Baytul-Maqdis* as his Qiblah for sixteen or seventeen months. The spot where he offered his prayers in this manner is still marked off in the mosque at Madīnah. (Qurṭubī)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was, of course, obedience personified, and he continued to offer his prayers with the *Baytul-Maqdis* as his Qiblah according to the divine commandment, but at the same time he longed that the Ka'bah, which had been the Qiblah of Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليهم السلام may be established as his also. The Way of Allah being that He, in His grace, often fulfils the wishes of those of His servants who have found His favour, the Holy Prophet ﷺ hoped that Allah would grant this wish. The Holy Qur'ān describes the situation thus:

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى السَّمَآءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

> "We have been seeing you turn your face to heaven. So, We will certainly assign to you a Qiblah that you would like. Now, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (*Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*) (2:144).

One should notice that the verse we have just cited does not employ the terms, "Ka'bah" or *Baytullah*, but the expression *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Mosque). It indicates that for those who live far away from Makkah it is not necessary, while offering *Ṣalāh*, to have the Ka'bah itself exactly in front of them, but turning one's face in the direction of the "House of Allah" is quite sufficient. On the other hand, for those who are present in the Sacred Mosque or can see the Ka'bah from a distance, it is necessary to have the Ka'bah or some part of it exactly in front of them, failing which the prayers will not be valid.

Now, when the Ka'bah was finally established as the Qiblah sixteen or seventeen months after the *Hijrah*, some Jews, associators and hypocrites began to scoff at the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين for being so capricious in the matter of

their Qiblah. The Holy Qur'ān reports this objection, adding that such an objection can come only from stupid people - just as earlier in this Sūrah those who turn away from the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام have been described as people who have besotted themselves. In replying to this objection, the second part of the verse shows that their stupidity lies in not realizing that the East and the West both belong to Allah Himself, and that He guides whomsoever He likes on the straight path. The verse, thus, explains the meaning of adopting an orientation - that is to say, neither does the Ka'bah nor the *Baytul-Maqdis* by itself possess any exclusive merit in this regard, and it is the divine commandment alone which gives to it the distinction of being the Qiblah - it could have as easily chosen some other place to serve the purpose. Moreover, the only merit in adopting a particular Qiblah lies in one's obedience to the divine commandment and in one's total submission to the will of Allah, which is the basic principle of the religion of the founder of the Ka'bah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān itself explains this truth in clear terms:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ

"Righteousness is not that you turn your faces to the East or the West; but righteousness is that one believes in Allah..." (2:177).

Or in an earlier Verse: اَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوْا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّٰهِ : "So whichever way you turn, there is the Face of Allah." (2:115) These verses clearly define the meaning and significance of adopting an orientation - that is, the place which has been chosen to serve as the Qiblah does not possess any merit in its own right, but the special merit arises from its having been chosen by Allah, and similarly turning towards it constitutes a meritorious act only insofar as it shows a readiness to obey divine commandment. The *raison d'etre* of changing the Qiblah for the Holy Prophet ﷺ might well be to show to the people in a visible form that a Qiblah is not an idol to be worshipped but only a concrete expression of divine commandment, and may hence be changed as and when Allah wills. In fact, the very next verse (2:143) explicitly says that when the *Baytul-Maqdis* was earlier appointed as the Qiblah, it was intended to show who was willing to obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ and who was not.

Verse 142, thus, fully refutes the antagonists of Islam, and points

out that Allah guides whosoever He wills on the Straight Path - the Straight Path, of course, being the readiness to obey divine commandment without demur. And this Straight Path was granted to the Muslims by the grace of Allah. There is also the suggestion that in the matter of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah rectitude lies in obeying each and every divine commandment unquestioningly without being too curious about the *raison d'etre* of such a commandment. For, those who seek a *raison d'etre* usually do so because they wish to deny or denigrate or disobey the Sharī'ah.

According to a *ḥadīth* reported from Sayyidah 'Ā'isha رضی اللہ عنہا in the "Musnad" of Imām Aḥmad, the People of the Book are specially jealous of the Muslims for three things - (1) in answer to the divine commandment to every *Ummah* (or religious community) to set aside a day in the week for worship, the Jews chose Saturday and the Christians, Sunday, while the Muslims opted for Friday which happened to be the favourite of Allah; (2) the Ka'bah was appointed as the Qiblah for the Muslims, and not for others; (3) the Muslims were given the privilege of saying *Āmīn* while offering *Ṣalāh* behind an *'Imām*.

Verse 143 . . .

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا ...

And in the same way We made you a moderate Ummah (community), so that you should be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness to you. (Verse 143) 40

The verse qualifies the Islamic nation (*Ummah*) with the objective *Wasat* which signifies "moderate, middle or central", and is usually applied to a thing considered to be the best of its kind. According to a

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40. The earlier verse has dealt with the subject of the Qiblah or the orientation for *Ṣalāh* and has indicated that the "Straight Path" is identical with a willing acceptance of the divinely ordained injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Since the Islamic *Ummah* has accepted these injunctions without the least hesitation, the present verse says, by way of parenthesis, a few words of praise for it, bringing out the superiority of the Islamic *Ummah* over other Traditional communities. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi from the blessed Companion Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, the word *Wasat* is to be interpreted as "just" - in the sense of being "the best" (Qurtubi). The verse points out that just as Allah has granted to the Muslims a Qiblah which is superior to all other orientations, in the same way He has bestowed upon the Islamic *Ummah* the unparalleled distinction of being moderate, balanced and just - in short, the honour of occupying the central position among all the Ummahs or Traditional communities. This distinction will manifest itself in its full resplendence on the Day of Judgment. Those among the earlier Ummahs who had been denying their prophets would, on that day, pretend that they had never received a book from Allah nor had any prophet given them any kind of guidance. The Islamic *Ummah* would, then, be called upon to bear witness, and it would, testify that prophets had been coming from Allah in every age, and providing guidance to each and every people. The earlier Ummahs would raise the objection that since the Islamic *Ummah* did not exist at that time and could not possibly know what had been happening before it came into being, its testimony against the earlier peoples could not be valid. In reply to this, the Islamic *Ummah* would maintain that even if it was not an eyewitness to the events of the past, yet it had received an authentic report from the most reliable source of information that can possibly be - that is, from the Last Prophet ﷺ and from the Last Book of Allah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself would be called in as a witness, and he would confirm the testimony of his *Ummah*. (For details, see the various *Ahadith* reported in the collections of al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i and Imam Ahmad).

The most moderate of all people

According to the present verse, the characteristic quality which confers a superiority on the Islamic *Ummah* over others is its being *Wasat* - (a word which has been variously translated into English as "midmost, moderate, just, intermediary, middle, central or justly balanced.") In order to explain the implications of the word *Wasat*, commentators have usually made use of another Arabic adjective *Mu'tadil* (signifying "moderate or temperate") and the noun *I'tidal*

which means "being equal"; both the words come from the root *'Adl* which signifies "to be equal, or to make equal." [41]

In this regard one would like to know why the superiority of a human group or individual should be made to depend on the quality of moderation. Let us begin this discussion with a quite tangible fact. All the medical systems, old or new, are unanimous in accepting the principle that the health of the human body depends on the temperateness of the different elements of which it is composed, and that illness or disease comes from a disturbance of this equilibrium. According to the ancient Greek medicine, which was further developed by the Muslims, these elements or "humours" are four in number - blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile -, and the humours produce four physical states in the body - heat, cold, wetness and dryness. As long as the four states are properly balanced against one another, the human body enjoys good health; but as soon as there is an immoderate increase or decrease in any one of them, the body becomes diseased, and if the balance is not properly restored in time, it may succumb to the forces of death. Similarly, in the ethical and spiritual sphere too health depends on temperateness and inner equilibrium, and illness arises out of intemperance and disequilibrium, which, if allowed to grow, results in spiritual death. At the same time, anyone who has eyes to see would readily discover for himself that the essence of manhood which places man at the head of all created beings, does not lie in the physical states of his body - that he, in fact, shares with all the animals - but in something higher and subtler: namely, spiritual perfection. As the great Sūfī poet Rūmī has said: "Manhood does not reside in the flesh, or in the fat or in the skin; manhood is nothing else than seeking to please the Friend." As to those who ignore this essential attribute of man and allow it to be destroyed in themselves, Rūmī says: "These people you see all around are non-human; they are not men, but only wear the masks of man."

The Universal Man

This being so, we are naturally led to the conclusion that he alone

41. So, for the purpose of the present discussion we shall choose the English word "moderation" in order to explain certain essential features of the Islamic *Ummah*.

can deserve the title of *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* ("the Universal Man") who has attained ethical and spiritual equilibrium along with physical equilibrium. This quality has specially been granted to all the prophets عليهم السلام, and, in its most perfect form, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who is thus "the Universal Man" par excellence. As for humanity in general, Allah has, on the other hand, created a stable and complex system of medicines, instruments and physicians for the physical well-being of man; similarly, He has, on the other hand, sent His prophets who bring divine guidance for man, and who are provided with a certain amount of requisite physical force too, so that they may promulgate this law of equilibrium and moderation in the world. The Holy Qur'ān defines the purpose of sending prophets and messengers of Allah to men, and of giving them Divine Books:

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَ اَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ
بِالْقِسْطِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَاْسٌ شَدِيْدٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ

"Indeed, We have sent Our messengers with the clear signs, and We have sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that men might uphold justice. And We have sent down iron in which there is great might, and many uses for men." (57:25)

Let us add by way of explanation that "the Book" is meant for producing inner equilibrium and temperateness in men, and "the Balance" for producing equilibrium in their social conduct and economic transactions - the "Balance" may also stand for the Sharī'ah of every prophet which helps us to define what "equilibrium" really is in its various applications in the different spheres of human life, and which serves to establish justice in the world.

Now, let us recall that the verse under discussion characterizes the Islamic *Ummah* with the word *Wasat* ("moderate, middle, central"). Our discussion must have made it clear that this simple word comphrehends all the qualities which it is possible for an individual or a community of men to possess in this world. Through such a characterization of the Islamic *Ummah*, the Holy Qur'ān has thus indicated that this *Ummah* possesses the essential quality of manhood to a degree of perfection that no other *Ummah* does, and that it is superior to all others in serving the purpose for which the whole

cosmic order has been created, and for which all the prophets and divine books have been sent.

The Universal Community

Certain other verses of the Holy Qur'ān define this essential quality of the Islamic *Ummah* in more specific terms. For example: وممن خلقنا امة يهدون بالحق وبه يعدلون : "Among those We have created there is an *Ummah* which guides by the truth, and by it dispenses justice." (7:181) That is to say, the Islamic *Ummah* displays its spiritual equilibrium in giving up the pursuit of individual desires and interests in order to follow divine guidance and try to make others too do the same, and in settling all kinds of disputes in the light of divine law without being influenced by the vested interests of a person or a group. Another verse is still more specific:

كنتم خير امة اخرجت للناس تامرون بالمعروف وتنهون عن المنكر وتؤمنون بالله

> "You are the best *Ummah* that has been brought forth for men, bidding to good deeds and forbidding evil deeds and believing in Allah." (3:110)

It is the best *Ummah*, for it has been granted a unique Prophet ﷺ who taught us to respect all other prophets, and a Book which is the most comprehensive and the most perfect of all the Divine Books, and has in itself been endowed with the quality of temperateness, moderation and equilibrium to a degree as no other *Ummah* does enjoy; it has been destined to be the recipient of the most subtle modes of knowledge, to outshine others in all the forms of faith and practice, and, above all, in the fear of Allah - its field of action not limited to any one country or race but extending all over the world, and infusing all the spheres of human existence. The phrase اخرجت للناس : "raised for mankind." (3:110) indicates that the very purpose for which it has been brought into being is to work for the good of men, and to help them find the way to salvation and to Paradise, its function and, so to say, its very insignia as an *Ummah* being to guide people towards good deeds and to dissuade them from evil deeds. This role of the Islamic *Ummah* has been formulated very succinctly in a *ḥadith*: الدين النصيحة : "Religion consists in having the good of others at heart" - particularly of other Muslims. Let us add that the good deeds towards which this

Ummah is meant to guide others are those which have been defined as such by the Sharī'ah, while the evil deeds from which it is to dissuade them include infidelity (*Kufr*), association (*Shirk*), innovations in religion (*Bid'ah*), sins of different kinds, illegitimate customs, transgression of divine commandments, immoral or indecent actions, etc. As to dissuading people from evil deeds, this too may take various forms - it may require the use sometimes of the tongue, sometimes of the hand, sometimes of the pen and sometimes of the sword - in fact, it would include all the forms of *Jihād*. As far as the extensive and intensive display of this particular quality is concerned, no other *Ummah* can compare with the Islamic *Ummah*.

Moderateness: A Comparative View

Let us now consider how far the temperateness or the moderation of this *Ummah* is borne out by actual facts. Since it is not possible here to make a detailed comparative study of the respective beliefs and practices of all the Ummahs, we shall give only a few examples which would, we hope, satisfactorily establish the superiority of this *Ummah* over others.

First of all, let us take up the doctrinal aspect. In the case of the earlier Ummahs one would observe that on the one hand they took their prophets to be the sons of Allah and started worshipping them - قَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ : "The Jews said, 'Ezra is the son of Allah', and the Christians said, 'Christ is the son of Allah'." (9:30) -, and that on the other hand some people from among them, in spite of having recognized and acknowledged their prophet on the basis of his oft-repeated miracles, refused to obey him when he asked them to take part in a holy war, and bluntly said: اِذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ : "Go forth, you and your Lord, and fight; we will be sitting here." (5:24) We sometimes see even the spectacle of prophets being tortured by their own followers. On the contrary, we have the Islamic *Ummah* which has such a deep love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Muslims have, in every period of their history, taken it to be the greatest blessing to be able to sacrifice their own lives and even the lives of their wives and children at his call, and yet it has never exceeded the limit, and has placed the Holy Prophet ﷺ only in the station of a prophet and not in the station of Allah. In spite of knowing him to be the most perfect of

all the prophets, it has been calling him عبدالله ورسوله : "the servant of Allah, and His messenger." The doctrinal position with regard to him, as defined in the famous Arabic poem "*Qaṣīdah al-Burdah*", is that, short of attributing "the sonhood of Allah" to him (which the Christians do in the case of Christ, and which constitutes an act of infidelity), anything that one says in his praise would be correct; or, in the words of a Persian poet, addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ :

بعد از خدا بزرگ توئی قصه مختصر

"In ṣhort, after God, you are the greatest."

When we turn from the doctrinal aspect to a consideration of the actual attitudes and practices in the matter of worship and rites, we again find similar excesses and aberrations on the part of earlier Ummahs. On the one hand, we see their religious scholars misinterpreting or changing the injunctions of their Sharī'ah and even distorting the Sacred Books for a few pieces of silver, and inventing all kinds of ruses to get rid of divinely ordained rites; on the other hand, we find people giving up the world altogether, imprisoning themselves in monastic cells, refusing to accept their share in the blessings of the physical world which Allah has not only granted to man but the enjoyment of which also He has permitted, and, in short, believing that imposing hardships on oneself carries the highest merit and is in itself an act of worship par excellence. The history of Islamic Ummah, on the contrary, presents a totally different picture. On the one hand, it has never adopted monasticism as the supreme form of religious life - in fact, Islam forbids such an attitude. On the other hand, through its readiness to sacrifice property and life, even children and all for the sake of the commandments of Allah and His Prophet ﷺ , the *Ummah* established its sway even politically over a considerable area of the world. It has demonstrated in its practice as no other *Ummah* has that religion is meant to be put into action in the market-places and the halls of power as much as in the mosques and the contemplative retreats. It is the Islamic *Ummah* which has shown the world how the poor in spirit can move about in the robes of kings, and the kings in spirit conceal themselves in the garb of beggars - all because the king as well as the beggar knows that the greatest dignity lies in being the servant of Allah.

In the sphere of human and social relations too, the earlier Ummahs have in their behaviour been guilty of excess in one way or another. On the one hand, we see an indifference to human rights and particularly an utter disregard of the rights of women, and, in general, a pursuit of individual interests and desires irrespective of the question of right and wrong. On the other hand, we have the display of an exaggerated sentimentality which forbids the eating of animal flesh, in spite of Allah having made it lawful, and which frowns upon the killing of an insect even accidentally. It was the Islamic *Ummah* and its Sharī'ah which established an equilibrium and a just order in the field of human relations. On the other hand, it set down a clear code of human rights, extended them to women as well, and prescribed that not only in times of peace but on the battle-field itself the enemies too must enjoy certain inalienable rights. On the other hand, it clearly demarcated every right and every duty, and put down every act of falling back from the prescribed mark or exceeding it as a crime. The Islamic Sharī'ah also taught that one should try to fulfil all of one's obligations towards others, but if one saw one's own rights suffer, one should exercise patience and forgiveness.

In the economic sphere too, the other Ummahs have been a prey to excesses of different kinds. For example, in our own age we have, on the one hand, the Capitalist system which pays no heed to the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful, and is totally blind to the welfare of the people, but exalts the amassing of wealth as the highest virtue; on the other hand are certain economic systems which have no respect for personal property. In actual fact, the essence of these two hostile systems is the same - the pursuit of worldly things as the be-all and the end-all of human life. Contrary to this, the Islamic Sharī'ah brings the conflicting elements into an equilibrium, giving to each its proper place. On the one hand, it does not allow the amassing of wealth to be made the ultimate end of man's effort, nor does it make human dignity depend on the considerations of money or rank or office. On the other hand, it promulgates certain principles for the distribution of wealth in a balanced manner so that no member of a society should be deprived of the basic necessities of life, nor should an

individual or a group appropriate all the available wealth. The things which can be shared in common by all the members of a society have been entrusted to public or joint control, while in certain specific things the right to private property has been fully respected. It made a clear-cut distinction between lawful (*Ḥalāl*) possessions and unlawful (*Ḥarām*) possessions, insisting on the spiritual merit of lawful possessions and laying down the rules for making use of them.

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) According to the present verse, Allah has made the Islamic *Ummah* an equitable and just, and hence a trustworthy community, "so that" it may be qualified to bear witness. From this we infer the legal principle that one who is not *'Ādil* (trustworthy - as defined by the Sharī'ah) cannot be acceptable as a witness in a court of law.

(2) According to al-Qurṭubī, this verse establishes *Ijmā'*: (اِجماع), or the consensus of the Islamic *Ummah*, as one of the four deciding agencies in the matter of legislation. For, the very fact that Allah Himself has accepted this *Ummah* as a trustworthy witness as against the other traditional communities, shows that the consensus of this *Ummah* is a deciding factor in legislative matters, and that it is necessary (*Wājib*) to act upon it. Thus, the consensus of the blessed Companions has to be accepted by their successors, and that of the latter by the next generation.

According to Al-Tafsīr al-Mazharī, this verse establishes the principle that the deeds and actions of this *Ummah* which have been approved by a consensus are all of them commendable, for, if one were to admit the possibility of a consensus on an error, the *Ummah* cannot be characterized as being moderate and just.

Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ adds that the dependability of the consensus is not particular to the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or of the blessed Companions, but that the consensus of the Muslims in any age whatsoever is equally trustworthy, for this verse is addressed to the whole *Ummah* which includes not only the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ but also the succeeding generations of Muslims upto the

Day of Judgment. Thus, the Muslims living in any age whatsoever qualify as the witnesses of Allah whose agreement on a certain point becomes a deciding factor in matters of legislation, and who cannot arrive at a consensus on anything which should constitute an error or a deviation. [42]

. . . Verse 143

. . . وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ
الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ ۚ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى
الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ O

And We did not appoint the Qiblah which you used to observe except to know him who follows the Messenger as distinct from him who turns on his heels. And, it was burdensome indeed, but not on those whom Allah guided. And Allah is not to let your faith go waste. Certainly Allah is very kind, very merciful to the people. (Verse 143)

The History of the Qiblah

There is some difference of opinion among the blessed Companions and their Successors as to whether it was the *Baytullah* at Makkah or the "*Baytul-Maqdis*" at Jerusalem which was appointed as the Qiblah, when the five daily prayers were made obligatory in *Makkah al-Mukarramah* before the *Hijrah* (the migration of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madīnah). According to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the first Qiblah was the *Baytul-Maqdis*, and continued to be so even after the Hijrah for some sixteen or seventeen

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42. Let us not, however, forget that consensus or *Ijmā'* in this context does not at all imply a sort of referendum on the basis of adult franchise, but means the agreement of a majority of such scholars as fulfil the necessary conditions for pronouncing a judgment in the matters of the Sharī'ah - that is to say, those who possess the authority to exercise *Ijtihād*. It goes without saying that once a consensus of this kind has been arrived at in any matter, the majority of the *Ummah* accepts it, and holds by it.

months, and it was only then that Allah commanded that the *Baytullah* be taken as the Qiblah. However, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Makkah was that he used to offer his prayers between *al-Hajar al-Aswad* ("the Black Stone") and *al-Rukn al-Yamāniyy* ("the corner facing Yemen") so that his face should be turned towards the *Baytullah* and the *Baytul-Maqdis* both at the same time. But this was no longer possible when he migrated to Madinah, and hence his keen desire that the *Baytullah* be appointed as the new Qiblah. (Ibn Kathīr) But other Companions رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین are of the view that when the five daily prayers were made obligatory at Makkah, it was the *Baytullah* which served as the Qiblah for the Muslims as it had for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl علیہم السلام . As long as the Holy Prophet ﷺ stayed at Makkah, he continued to observe this Qiblah. But after the *Hijrah*, Allah ordained a change in the orientation, and the *Baytul-Maqdis* was appointed as the Qiblah, which it continued to be for sixteen or seventeen months. Then came a new commandment, and the *Baytullah* was restored as the Qiblah. Al-Qurṭubī, relying on the authority of Abū 'Amr, prefers the second view to the first. The *raison d'etre* of these changes of orientation has been explained like this. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to Madīnah, he had to deal with the Jews, and in order to familiarize them with Islam he adopted their Qiblah under divine commendment. But, by and by it became evident that a stubborn people like the Jews would not easily give up their hostility to Islam. So, Allah allowed him to go back to the original Qiblah, which, being the Qiblah of his forefathers, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl علیہم السلام , was naturally dearer to him. In fact, the mosque of Sayyidna Salih علیہ السلام was oriented towards the *Baytullah*, as is shown by an incident reported by al-Qurṭubī from Abū al-'Āliyah al-Riyāhī. The latter once had a debate with a Jew concerning the orientation adopted by Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses علیہ السلام). The Jew insisted that the great prophet turned in his prayers towards the *Sakhrah*, The Dome of the Rock in the Sacred Mosque at Jerusalem, while Abū al-'Āliyah maintained that he stood near the *Sakhrah*, but his face was turned towards the *Baytullah*. Finally, the latter suggested that the dispute could be decided by having a look at

the mosque of Sayyidnā Ṣālih عليه السلام situated on a hill below the *Baytul-Maqdis*. And, on visiting the mosque, they found that it was oriented towards the *Baytullah*.

Now, according to those who prefer the first of the two views, the *raison d'etre* was that it was necessary at Makkah to differentiate the Muslims from the idol-worshippers and to emphasize the distinction between the two, and hence the *Baytul-Maqdis* was appointed as the Qiblah of the Muslims instead of the *Baytullah* which was at that time the Qiblah of the *mushrikīn*. Then, after the *Hijrah*, there arose a new need at Madīnah - that of highlighting the distinction between the Muslims and the Jews. So, the Qiblah of the Jews was given up, and the *Baytullah* was adopted as the Qiblah of the Muslims.

On account of the difference between these two views, the phrase "the Qiblah which you used to observe" has also been interpreted in two ways. On the basis of the first view, "the Qiblah" referred to in the present verse can only be the *Baytul-Maqdis* which was the first and earlier Qiblah; on the basis of the second, it can also be the Ka'bah which was the earliest and the first Qiblah. Anyhow, the real import of the verse remains the same in either case - the commandment with regard to the change in orientation is a test of the faith of those who claim to be the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, which would openly demonstrate the distinction between those who are genuinely obedient to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, and those who follow their individual opinion. History records that after this verse had been revealed, those who were weak in their faith, or were just hypocrites, forsook Islam, and even accused the Holy Prophet ﷺ of having gone back to the ways of his own people - that is, of the *mushrikīn*.

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) The present verse shows that sometimes an injunction based on the *Sunnah*, or the Tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is abrogated by the Holy Qur'ān. As Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ points out in his "Aḥkām al-Qur'ān", the Noble Qur'ān does not specify that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was ever commanded, before the *Hijrah* or after, to turn in his prayers towards the *Baytul-Maqdis*: we find the relevant evidence only in the

Hadith and the *Sunnah*. It comes to mean that a practice which had been established by the *Sunnah* was abrogated by this verse of the Holy Qur'ān, appointing the *Baytullah* as the Qiblah.

(2) This verse also goes to show that the *Hadith* of the Messenger of Allah too, in a certain respect, cannot be delinked from the Holy Qur'ān, and that the Holy Qur'ān recognizes the legitimacy of those injunctions which find no mention in the Holy Qur'ān but have been instituted by the *Hadith* alone. For, the present verse clearly states at the end that prayers which had been offered, taking the *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah, as commanded by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, are altogether valid and acceptable to Allah.

(3) This verse helps us to resolve a delicate problem in Islamic jurisprudence pertaining to the "*Khabar al-Wāhid*" (which is a *Hadith* reported by one or two persons only). The question which arises in this respect is whether an injunction laid down in the Holy Qur'ān, or definitely authenticated otherwise, can be abrogated by such a *hadith*. The Hanafi school of jurisprudence holds that it cannot, while the reports concerning this verse suggest that it can do so, if strong indications are present to establish the authenticity of such a *hadith*. For, al-Bukhārī, Muslim and nearly all the authentic collections of the *Ahādith* report the following circumstances from several Companions رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین. When the divine commandment changing the Qiblah came down, the Holy Prophet ﷺ offered his prayers at the time of *'Asr* (or, according to other reports cited by Ibn Kathīr, at the time of *zuhr*) facing the *Baytullah*. Some Companions, departing from the mosque, happened to pass by the mosque of the Banī Salamah tribe, and found these people offering their prayers in the direction of the *Baytul-Maqdis*. So, they called out to inform them that the Qiblah had now been changed, and that they had just offered their prayers along with the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the direction of the *Baytullah*. On hearing this, those people at once changed their orientation to *Baytullah* even in the course of the prayers. Nuwaylah Bint Muslim relates that women who were in the back row came forward, so that when the orientation had been changed, men were again in the front row and women in the back row. (Ibn Kathīr) Thus the Banū Salmah tribe adopted the new Qiblah the very same day. But the news

reached *Qubā* the next day in the course of the *Fajr* prayers - as reported by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Umar -, and the people of *Qubā* too turned towards the *Baytullah* in the course of the prayers. (Ibn Kathīr and Jaṣṣāṣ)

After citing these reports, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ concludes.

هذا خبر صحيح مستفيض فى أيدى أهل العلم قد تلقوه بالقبول فصار فى
حيزالتواتر الموجب للعلم

"Although this *ḥadīth* is essentially a solitary report, (that is, *Al-Khabar al-Wāhid*), yet, having been generally accepted and also being supported by strong indication with regard to its authenticity, it has acquired the status of a *ḥadīth* that has been related by a number of trustworthy reporters in an uninterrupted succession -- a fact which always leads to certitude."

The Ḥanafī jurists agree with this conclusion. They must, however, face another question. This *ḥadīth* acquired general acceptance only much later, while the news of the change in the orientation must have been conveyed to the Banū Salamah tribe and this *ḥadīth* immediately without its being widely known? Al-Jaṣṣāṣ replies that not only these people but all the Companions already knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished the *Baytullah* to be appointed as the Qiblah and had even been praying for it, and had begun to consider it quite probable that the injunction to retain *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah may not remain operative in the future. In other words, the probability of a change had made the continuation of the *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah a bit uncertain, and not definite. In view of this element of uncertainty, the *Khabar al-Wāhid* was considered to be quite sufficient for abrogating the earlier commandment. Otherwise, a *Khabar al-Wāhid* cannot justifiably abrogate a definite and final injunction laid down by the Holy Qur'ān.

(4) The present verse helps to resolve an important problem which has been the subject of a controversy: if the *'Imām* uses a microphone in leading *Ṣalāh*, would it be legitimate for the congregation to obey his call in their movements? If they can hear no more than the sound coming out of the loud-speaker, would it not invalidate their prayers?

As we have already noted, Al-Bukhārī reports a *ḥadīth* from the

blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, relating how the people of *Qubā* turned towards the *Baytullah* even in the course of their prayers as soon as they heard the commandment about the change in orientation. Commenting on this incident, the great Ḥanafī scholar al-'Aynī says: فيه جواز تعليم من ليس فى الصلوة من هو فيها :"This *ḥadīth* establishes the rule that a man who is not offering his prayers may teach or instruct the man who is engaged in his prayers." In another place, al-'Aynī also adds that from this *ḥadīth*, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī has derived the rule that if a man engaged in his prayers hears the words spoken by one who is not so engaged, it does not invalidate his prayers ('Umdah al-Qārī).

Of course, the Ḥanafi jurists in general hold that if a man engaged in his prayers obeys the call of another man who is not participating in these prayers, it invalidates his prayers. What they, however, mean is that obeying someone other than Allah in the course of *Salah* invalidates it, but if one is actually obeying a divine commandment and the other man is acting only as a means of communicating this injunction to him, it does not invalidate the prayers at all. An example would make the point clear. If a man, joining the congregational prayers, finds that there is no room left in the first row, and that he would be the only one to stand in the second, he should, according to the jurists, pull someone back from the first row and make him join the second row along with himself. Now, on the face of it, the man who allows himself to be pulled back is obeying someone other than Allah in the course of the prayers, and this should invalidate his prayers. But, in fact, it is not so. The most authoritative book of Ḥanafi jurisprudence, "Al-Durr al-Mukhtār", lays down the rule that the prayers of this man are perfectly valid. As to why his prayers would not be invalidated, Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī explains that this man has not actually been obeying the new-comer, but following a divine commandment conveyed to him by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Let us add that there are two different ways in which a man engaged in his prayers may obey the call of another man who is not participating with him in these prayers. (a) He may wish to please this man and to obey him. In such a case, the prayers would become invalid. (b) He obeys a commandment of the Shari'ah, conveyed to him by the other man. In this case, he is essentially obeying a divine commandment, and hence his prayers would not become invalid. (Ṭaḥṭāwī)

This discussion should make it easy to resolve the problem about the use of a microphone by an *'Imām* in leading the congregational prayers. Technical experts hold that the sound coming out of a loudspeaker is exactly the sound produced by the *'Imām*. If it is so, there is no question of the prayers being invalid. But if we suppose that the sound transmitted by a microphone is not exactly the sound produced by the *'Imām*, but only an imitation of the sound, or a report of what he has been saying, even then it would be improper to suspect that the people offering their prayers have been obeying the command of the microphone. For, it is obvious enough that they have been obeying the commandment of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the movements of the *'Imām* - the microphone does no more than inform them that the *'Imām* has, for example, bowed himself down or prostrated himself, and in accepting this information and following his movements, they obey the *'Imām* and not the instrument. And it is, of course, a divine commandment which requires us to obey the *'Imām* in the congregational prayers.

(5) There is a phrase in the present verse which requires some explanation: "And Allah is not to let your faith go waste." If we take *'Imān* (faith) in its usual sense, the phrase would be interpreted like this. When the Qiblah was changed, some stupid people thought that the Muslims had forsaken Islam, and that their *'Imān* had now become null and void. The verse assures the Muslims that Allah would not allow their *'Imān* to go waste, and asks them not to fall prey to such senseless conjectures.

On the other, on the basis of certain *Aḥādīth*, some early commentators have interpreted the word *'Imān* in the verse to mean the *Ṣalāh*. According to this interpretation, Allah assures the Muslims that the commandment changing the Qiblah would in no way affect the validity of the prayers they have been offering so far in the direction of the *Baytul-Maqdis* - Allah would not allow these prayers to go waste, for they are valid, and have already been accepted.

Al-Bukhārī has reported from the Companion al-Barā' 'Ibn 'Āzib, and al-Tirmidhī from the Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ that when the *Baytullah* was appointed as the Qiblah, people became worried about the fate of those Muslims who had been praying in the direction

of the *Baytul-Maqdis*, but had died before having the opportunity to pray in the direction of the *Baytullah*.

Verse 144

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِى السَّمَآءِ ۚ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰهَا
فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوْا
وُجُوْهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ ۚ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ○

We have been seeing you turn your face to heaven. So, We will certainly assign to you a Qiblah that you would like. Now, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (*Al-Masjid al-Harām*). And, wherever you be, turn your faces in its direction. Even those who have been given the Book know well that here is the truth from their Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what they do. (Verse 144)

The orientation to Qiblah

This verse begins by speaking of how deeply the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished that the Ka'bah be appointed as the Qiblah of the Muslims. This inclination has been explained in different ways, but there is no real contradiction involved in these different views. For example, it has been said that before prophethood was conferred on him, he used to follow, out of the impulsion of his own nature, the way of Sayyidna Ibrāhīm (Abraham) علیہ السلام , and that when he began to receive the Revelation, the Holy Qur'an itself designated his Shari'ah as being in total accord with the Abrahamic Way. Moreover, the Qiblah of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام as well as that of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl علیہ السلام had been the Ka'bah. So, it was quite in the nature of things for him to wish that the Ka'bah be appointed as the Qiblah of the Muslims. An additional factor was that the Arab tribes, in spite of being associators, at least claimed to be the followers of the Abrahamic Way, and acknowledged the Ka'bah as their Qiblah in contradiction to the Jews. Once the Ka'bah had been made the Qiblah of the Muslims, the Arabs could be expected to find Islam more acceptable. As for the hope that the adoption of the *Baytul-Maqdis* as the Qiblah would bring the Jews closer to Islam, it had been dashed by the events of the last sixteen or

seventeen months, for the hostility of the Jews to Islam, fed by their vanity, had only been growing more intense.

Whatever be the motive, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was very keen to see the Ka'bah appointed as the Qiblah. Now, prophets are as close to Allah as man can ever be, and this exalted station teaches them to observe a very strict spiritual etiquette - they never submit a request before Allah until and unless they have received the permission to do so. This principle leads us to believe that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had already been allowed to pray for his wish to be fulfilled, and that he hoped his prayer would be granted. So, he used to turn his face again and again to the sky, anxiously waiting for an angel to appear and bring the injunction he had been wishing for.

In the present verse, Allah describes this state of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in an appreciative manner, and promises to assign him a Qiblah that he would like. Immediately after the promise, there follows the commandment: فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ : "Now turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque." Here we find a manifestation of the subtle workings of divine grace - the Holy Prophet ﷺ was, to begin with, granted the joy of hearing a promise made, and, immediately after, the greater joy of seeing the promise fulfilled. (Qurṭubī, Jaṣṣāṣ and Maẓharī)

Injunctions and related considerations

As we have explained earlier, Allah is not confined to any direction or dimension - قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ : "Say: the East and the West both belong to Allah." (2:115) But in order to institute a communal unity among the Muslims scattered all over the world, Divine Wisdom thought fit to assign them a particular and definite orientation which could serve as a visible symbol of that unity. Now, ṭhis orientation could have as easily been provided by the *Baytul-Maqdis*. But the Ka'bah was finally chosen as the Qiblah in accordance with the wish of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and the injunction was announced in the present verse. The situation required that the Holy Qur'ān should use the phrase: 'Turn your face toward the Ka'bah, or toward the *Baytullah*.' But we actually find the Holy Qur'ān saying: "Turn your face in the

direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*." This particular mode of expression helps to clarify several important questions with regard to the Qiblah.

Although, the Qiblah, to be precise, is the *Baytullah*, which is known as the Ka'bah, yet it is obvious that one can turn exactly towards the *Baytullah* only so long as one can see it with one's own eyes, and that for those who live at some distance and cannot see it directly, it would be too rigorous an obligation to fulfil, if they were required to turn exactly towards the *Baytullah* - in the case of distant towns, an exact orientation would be difficult and uncertain even with the help of the instruments and calculations. But the Islamic Shari'ah always aims at making things easy for people. So, the Holy Qur'ān has designated as the Qiblah, not the *Baytullah* or the Ka'bah, but *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* which covers a much wider area, and in the direction of which it is easy to turn even for those who live in far off places.

Then, a greater facility has been provided by the use of the word *Shaṭr*. This Arabic word signifies "the half of a thing", or "the direction in which a thing lies." According to the consensus of the commentators, here the word has been used in the second sense. So, the word itself points to the rule that in the case of places which are far from Makkah it is not even necessary for the prayers to be valid that one should turn exactly towards *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* - for, it is quite sufficient to turn only "in the direction" of the Sacred Mosque, as the Holy Qur'ān itself has indicated. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

Let us give an example to make the rule as clear as possible. For countries which lie to the East of Makkah (e.g. Pakistan or India), the direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* means the West. So, if one turns towards the West, one's prayers would be valid enough. Since the point at which the sun sets in the summer is different from that where it sets in the winter, the *Fuqahā'* (the Muslim jurists) have decided that for the purposes of *Ṣalāh* in such countries, the West (the direction of the Qiblah in this case) lies in between these two points. In mathematical terminology it means that an area covering 48 degrees between these two points is to be taken as being the direction

of the Qiblah. That is to say, even if one inclines 24 degrees to the right or to the left of the point at which *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* is situated, one would still be considered to be praying in the right direction, and one's prayers would be quite valid. (For details, see "Sharḥ al-Chaghmīnī, ch. IV)

This discussion should be enough to expose the ignorance and muddle-headedness of those who, finding a slight deviation of two or three degrees in the orientation of some mosques in Pakistan and India, have pronounced the prayers offered in these mosques to be null and void. Such baseless opinions only betray the desire on their part to produce confusion and bickering among the Muslims. Let us not forget that the Islamic Sharī'ah is meant for all men and for all the countries of the world, and will last till the Day of Judgment. Hence, the injunctions of the Sharī'ah pertaining to all the spheres of human life have been made easy to practise, so that Muslims living in farflung hamlets, mountains, forests or islands may act upon them only on the basis of their own observation and experience, without needing the help of scientific instruments or mathematical calculations. Thus, people living to the East of Makkah may take an area covering 48 degrees as their Qiblah - a deviation of five or ten degrees would not affect the validity of their prayers in any way. This has been made quite clear by a *ḥadīth* reported by al-Tirmidhi from the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہ which says: مَابَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَ الْمَغْرِبِ قِبْلَةٌ : "The Qiblah lies between the East and the West." This *ḥadīth* is actually addressed to the people of Madīnah whose Qiblah lies, to be precise, in the direction of the South somewhere between the East and the West, but, in effect, the *ḥadīth* provides an explanation of the phrase "in the direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*." This is the general principle; one should, however, make an effort to ensure, in laying down the foundation of a mosque, that the orientation towards the *Baytullah* is as exact as possible. The successors of the Blessed Companions and the generations following them had adopted a very simple method for determining the correct orientation: If there was a mosque built by the blessed Companions present in a town, the neighbouring mosques

were given the same orientation, and these in their turn used to serve as the models for the mosques in the villages or towns in the region concerned, thus setting up a chain which went on prolonging itself. Consequently, the method of determining the Qiblah in places far off from Makkah has always been this: If an old mosque is present in the vicinity, the new mosques should conform to its orientation, for in so many towns it is the blessed Companions themselves or their successors who have built mosques and determined their orientation which has been followed by later generations.

To conclude, the mosques which have so far been built are quite sufficient for the purpose of determining the orientation, and it is not proper to raise unnecessary objections and doubts in this respect - the Sharī'ah actually disapproves of such attempts at leading Muslims into perplexity. For, such a perplexity may sometimes have the consequence of making people suspect that in so far as the blessed Companions, their successors or the generality of Muslims have not been able to determine a mathematically correct orientation, their prayers have not been valid. Such a thought is not only false, but also betrays the insolence of the man who can harbour it. It is in view of this that Ibn *Rajab*, the famous Ḥanbalī scholar of the 8th century A.H., disapproves of the use of astronomical instruments and complex mathematical calculations for the purpose of fixing the orientation. He writes:

واما علم التسيير فاذا تعلم منه ما يحتاج اليه للاستهداء ومعرفة القبلة والطرق كان جائزا عند الجمهور ومازاد عليه فلا حاجة اليه وهويشغل عما هو اهم منه وربما ادى التدقيق فيه الى اساءة الظن بمحاريب المسلمين فى امصارهم كما وقع فى ذلك كثير من اهل هذا العلم قديما وحديثا وذلك يفضى الى اعتقاد خطأ الصّحابة والتابعين فى صلواتهم فى كثير من الامصار وهو باطل وقد انكر الامام احمد الاستدلال بالجدى وقال انما وردما بين المشرق والمغرب قبلة

"As for the science of astronomy, it is legitimate, according to the 'Ulamā' in general, to acquire it for its being helpful in de-

> termining the Qiblah or in finding one's way in a journey or the directions of the roads. A greater knowledge than this is not at all necessary (according to the Sharī'ah), for that may lead one to neglect more important things, and an indulgence in complex calculations may sometimes produce vile doubts about the mosques of Muslims in their towns - a weakness to which the amateurs of such sciences are all too prone. It may even lead one to believe that the prayers of the blessed Companions and their successors in certain towns had been invalid - a belief which is totally false. For this reason, Imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal has forbidden the Pole-Star to be taken into consideration for determining the orientation, on the ground that the *ḥadīth* says no more than that the Qiblah lies between the East and the West."

As for deserted regions, forests or new settlements, etc. where no earlier mosques are to be found, the Sharī'ah lays down this rule on the basis of the practice of the blessed Companions and their successors: in such places one should arrive at an approximate determination of the Qiblah with the help of the Sun, the Moon and Pole-Star, these being the phenomena with which everyone is familiar enough; and if one still suspects some slight deviation, one should ignore it. For, according to *al-Badā'i'*, the authoritative work on Islamic jurisprudence, in places far off from Makkah, an approximately correct orientation, chosen on the basis of such general indications, stands for the Ka'bah, and all the injunctions pertaining to the Qiblah apply to the orientation selected in this manner. The Sharī'ah provides many illustrations of the basic principle involved here. For example, sleep is taken to stand for the passing of wind, and invalidates the *Wuḍū* (the prescribed ablution); or, a journey is taken to represent hardship, even when an actual journey does not involve it, and a man who is in the course of any kind of a journey is given all the concessions allowed by the Sharī'ah to a traveller. The principle requires that an orientation determined on the basis of general and familiar indications should be accepted as the Qiblah. The great scholar known as "Allāmah Baḥr al-'Ulum" lays down the rule thus in his "Rasā'il al-Arkān":

والشرط وقوع المسامتة على حسب مايرى المصلى ونحن غيرمأ مورين بالمسَامتة على مايحكم به الالات الرصدية ولهذا افتوا ان الانحراف المفسدأن يتجاوز المشارق و المغارب

"The only condition necessary to be fulfilled in turning towards the Qiblah is that the man offering his prayers should be duly convinced that his face is turned in the direction of the Ka'bah. The Sharī'ah does not compel us to adopt exactly the orientation which can be obtained only with the help of astronomical instruments. So the 'Ulamā in general have come to the conclusion that a deviation invalidates the prayers only when the difference is as great as between the East and the West."

Those interested in a detailed discussion of the subject may consult my book in Urdu, "*Simt-e-Qiblah.*"

Verse 145

وَلَئِنْ اَتَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ بِكُلِّ اٰيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُوْا قِبْلَتَكَ ج وَمَا اَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ج وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ج وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ اِنَّكَ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ O

And even if you bring every sign to those who have been given the Book, they would not follow your Qiblah. And you are not to follow their Qiblah, nor are they to follow each other's Qiblah. And if you were to follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you will then certainly be among the unjust. (Verse 145)

In continuing the discussion on the subject of the Qiblah, or the divinely-ordained orientation, the present verse provides yet another instance of the maliciousness of the People of the Book. It is not that they demand solid and convincing arguments in order to be able to accept the new injunction with regard to the Qiblah: it is sheer stubbornness which does not allow them to give their assent, and no proof in the world, declares the Holy Qur'ān, is ever going to satisfy

them. In fact, their two groups display an equal malice even towards each other - the Jews have adopted the *Baytul-Maqdis* as their Qiblah, while the Christians have chosen the East, and each group rejects the Qiblah of the other. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ , cannot accept either of these two orientations, for the new Qiblah of the Muslims - the *Baytullah* - has been instituted by a divine commandment, and is never going to be abrogated. So, there is no likelihood of an agreement between the People of the Book and the Muslims in this matter. The *Baytul-Maqdis*, no doubt, had once been instituted by a divine commandment, but that commandment has now been abrogated. Anyone who follows an abrogated injunction, and ignores the new injunction which has replaced the earlier one, is actually disobeying Allah, and acting upon his individual opinion and personal desire. Naturally, it is impossible for the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the desires of the People of the Book. But, supposing for the sake of supposition, were he to do so even after having received a definite injunction through the *Waḥy* (Revelation), he would be counted among the unjust - that is, among those who disobey divine commandments. Such a situation, however, can never arise. Being a prophet, he is essentially sinless, and as such cannot possibly be among the unjust. From this principle it logically follows that it is impossible for him to favour the desires of the People of the Book, and to accept their Qiblah as his own.

Let us make it quite clear that this warning is outwardly addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , but is, in fact, intended for his *Ummah*, which is being asked to realize fully the gravity of the sin of ignoring or disobeying the injunction which has finally established the *Baytullah* as the Qiblah of the Muslims.

As for the phrase, وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ : "You are not to follow their Qiblah", it is meant to declare that the *Baytullah* shall now stay as the Qiblah upto the end of the world. Thus, the declaration refutes the scoffing allegation of the People of the Book that there was no stability in the Islamic injunctions, and that the Muslims might again adopt the *Baytul-Maqdis* as their Qiblah. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Verses 146 - 147

الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ
فَرِيْقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُوْنَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ اَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ
فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ۝

Those whom We have given the Book recognize him (The Holy Prophet) as they recognize their own sons. And, in fact, a group of them does conceal the truth while they know. The truth is from your Lord. So, never be among those who doubt." (Verses 146 - 147)

Verses 144 and 145 have told us how the People of the Book knew in their hearts that a divine commandment itself had instituted the *Baytullah* as the Qiblah of the Muslims, and yet denied this fact in public. Now, the two present verses show that their conduct towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ was equally dishonest and malicious.

The Torah and the Evangile had already foretold the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and set down the signs and indications which should help the people to recognize him. On the basis of the irrefutable evidence provided by their own Sacred Books, the Jews and the Christians knew him to be the promised Last Prophet ﷺ , but many of them refused to acknowledge him as such out of sheer obstinacy.

Let us add a word or two in order to explain the simile employed here by the Holy Qur'ān - that of man recognizing his own son without any doubt or ambiguity. As everyone knows, in bringing two terms into comparison with each other, a simile does not involve in this analogy all the aspects of these two terms, but only those which should be relevant to the occasion. So, in considering the present simile one should not allow one's imagination to roam far afield, and bring under discussion even those cases which happen to be illegitimate. For, the present simile intends to make a very simple and obvious point - since the son grows from infancy to manhood normally under the eyes of his parents, his face or general appearance is quite sufficient for his father to recognize him without any doubt or hesitation. The Jews and the Christians enjoyed the same kind of facility - or even certainty - in being able to recognize the Last Prophet ﷺ . So, to persist in denying

him was as dishonest as refusing to recognize one's own son should normally be.

And it was just this kind of gross dishonesty that the People of the Book were indulging in. Some of them, while denying the truth themselves, even tried to keep it concealed from others, although they knew fully well that this particular truth (that is to say, the new injunction with regard to the Qiblah) had been established by Revelation from Allah Himself.

The phrase, "The Truth is from your Lord", can also be interpreted in a general sense as providing a definition of the nature of truth - namely, that alone is truth which comes from Allah. One who has understood this fact can never allow himself to be in doubt with regard to this particular truth or to any other which has been revealed to a prophet by Allah.

Verses 148-150

وَلِكُلٍّ وِّجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيْهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ ۗ اَيْنَ مَا تَكُوْنُوْا يَاْتِ
بِكُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝ وَمِنْ حَيْثُ
خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَاِنَّهٗ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ۗ
وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝ وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ
شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ
لِئَلَّا يَكُوْنَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ ۙ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ ۚ فَلَا
تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِيْ ۚ وَلِاُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ۝

And for everyone there is a direction to which he turns his face. Strive, then, to excel each other in good deeds. Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together. Allah is certainly powerful over everything. And from wheresoever you set out, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām). That, indeed, is the truth from

your Lord. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. And from wheresoever you set out, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām). And wherever you are, turn your faces in its direction, so that people should have no argument against you, except for those among them who are unjust - do not fear them, but fear Me! -, and so that I should perfect My blessing upon you, and that you may get the right path. (Verses 148 - 150)

The change of Qiblah

The question of religious orientation being of the highest significance for an *Ummah* (or a traditional community), these verses continue and enlarge upon the theme of the Qiblah, and lay down further *raisons d'etre* for the change.

It is, the commentators point out, an observable fact that every traditional community has had a religious orientation of its own, whether appointed by Allah or chosen by itself. This being so, why should anyone object, or wonder that Allah has appointed for the Islamic *Ummah* a Qiblah peculiar to it? After all, it is a regular and distinct Tradition in its own right - in fact, the last of all Traditions, which makes it all the more necessary that it must have a distinct Qiblah. Anyhow, once the divine commandment has been promulgated, the Muslims need not worry about the objections or the ridicule of others, but should, above all, concern themselves with the performance of good deeds (as defined by Allah and His Prophet ﷺ). They should, indeed, give up fruitless controversies and strive to excel in good deeds, for they have to appear before Allah on the Day of Judgment when they will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds.

The *raison d'etre* laid down in this verse requires that the Muslims should, whether staying at home or travelling, turn their faces in the direction of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, for that undoubtedly is the Qiblah appointed for them by divine commandment. It is obligatory for them to obey this as well as any other commandment, bearing in mind that Allah is not unaware of what men do.

In repeating this commandment, Verse 150 adds a third *raison d'etre*. The Torah and the Evangile had indicated that the promised Last Prophet would have the Ka'bah as his Qiblah. If the Muslims continued to pray with the *Baytul-Maqdis* as their Qiblah, the opponents of Islam would have found an argument to justify their denial of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But the new commandment with regard to the Qiblah takes away the ground from under their feet, and at least the just ones among them can no longer raise this kind of objection. Of course, the stubborn and malignant ones would still carp - they would start saying that it was the *Baytul-Maqdis*, and not the Ka'bah, which had been the Qiblah of the earlier prophets, and that the adoption of the Ka'bah constituted an infringement of the established prophetic tradition. But the Muslims need not worry about defending Islam against such baseless objections, for the only thing which can be harmful to them is not the hostility of men but the disobedience to or disregard of divine commandments. So, in Verse 150, Allah asks the Muslims to fear, not the enemies of Islam, but Him alone. This is the only way to remain true to the divine guidance they have received - namely, Islam. This steadfastness, too, is a blessing from Allah, and the blessing will appear in its perfect glory in the other world when the Muslims shall, as a reward for their faithfulness, be admitted to Paradise.

Let us note that in announcing the commandment with regard to the change in orientation, Verses 144-150 address the listeners three times in the singular number and twice in the plural. In a general way, one can say that this repetition is meant for emphasis. The commandment fixing a new Qiblah not only provided an occasion for the glee of the opponents of Islam, but was also a very conspicuous and sudden change in the religious observances of the Muslims themselves, whose hearts would have remained perturbed without such an emphatic repetition. The reiteration also suggests that this is the final and definite decision with regard to the Qiblah, and that no further change can be expected in this matter.

Al-Qurṭubī has, however, explained this mode of expression in such a way that the repetition becomes something more than mere emphasis, and each phrase, in being repeated, acquires a new

implication. It goes without saying that the commandments in the singular number are addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, and those in the plural to the blessed Companions and to the Muslims in general. Thus, the commandment in Verse 144 pertains to the situation of those who find themselves in Madīnah or in their own home-town, whatever that might be, and is intended to make it clear that the injunction is not particular to the mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ but applies to every town or village and to every quarter of a town. Verse 149 repeats the commandment with the addition of the phrase "from wheresoever you set out", which shows that the injunction now refers to the state of a journey. Since a journey involves different situations - for example, unbroken travel for several days at a time, or a short or long stay somewhere in the course of the journey -, Verse 150 repeats the injunction in order to cover all these situations.

Let us add that Verse 148 introduces the theme of orientation with the word *Wijhatun*, which lexically signifies "the thing one turns one's face to", and which has been interpreted by the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās as "Qiblah" or religious orientation. In fact, the word *Qiblatun* itself appears in the reading of the blessed Companion Ubayy ibn Ka'b, which leaves no ambiguity in interpreting the phrases. [43]

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43. Before we leave the subject, let us remark that nowadays quite a good number of people, especially those with a Western formation, approach the Holy Qur'ān as they do a book composed by a human author who pays due regard to what commonly passes as logic and sequential argument, and often do feel embarrassed or confused when they come across the close repetition of words and phrases in the Book of Allah, finding it impossible to explain or justify what is seemingly redundant. And it is not unlikely that this embarrassment may open the way to shame-faced misgivings and doubts even in the minds of those who wish to serve the cause of Islam in the modern world. What these men of good will tend to ignore is the elementary fact that the Word of Allah cannot be subservient to the rules of philosophical or literary composition, and that the reiteration of words and phrases, even of a sequence of sentences, is a regular mode of expression common to all the Sacred Books of the world. Moreover, the great orthodox (in the sense of unfailing adherence to the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*) commentators of the Holy Qur'ān have tried, each in his own way, to suggest the *raisons d'etre* of this device, and also to explain

Continued

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) Verse 145 has already indicated to the Muslims that although Allah has now appointed a new and permanent Qiblah for the whole of mankind, yet the Jews and the Christians are not going to give up their respective orientations, nor shall the Muslims ever forsake their own. The People of the Book, anyhow, have no right to object to the Ka'bah being divinely chosen as the Qiblah of the Muslims, for - as Verse 148 reminds us - every traditional community (*Ummah*) has always had a Qiblah of its own, and so does the Islamic *Ummah*. Since the Muslims can be sure of their right to a Qiblah peculiar to them, and the People of the Book are not expected to listen to reason, Allah asks the Muslims in this verse not to engage themselves in fruitless discussions and futile disputes, but to "strive, then, to excel in good deeds." The Holy Qur'ān discourages unnecessary discussions, for they

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Continued

the possible implications of each particular instance of repetition. Some of the explanations pertaining to the verses we are concerned with here have been summarized by Maulanā Muḥammad Idris in his own commentary, from which we borrow the following resume:-

(1) The first declaration is addressed to those who reside in Makkah, the second to those who live in the Arabian peninsula, and the third to all men living anywhere in the world.

(2) The first is intended to cover all the situations and states, the second to cover all the places, and the third to cover all the periods of time.

(3) This passage of the Holy Qur'ān lays down three *raisons d'etre* for the change in the religious orientation; hence, the commandment has been affirmed afresh along with each argument.

(4) This was the first occasion in the Islamic Sharī'ah when a new commandment to abrogate an earlier one came. So, repetition was necessary to impress upon the minds of the people the multiple significance of the occasion and of the commandment.

(5) The abrogation of any commandment whatsoever is likely to give rise to all sorts of doubts, and to produce internal or external disorder. The naive cannot, anyhow, understand the why and how of an abrogation occurring in the case of a divine commandment. So, an emphatic reiteration becomes all the more essential.

make one neglect one's real task, which is to prepare oneself for one's death and for the other world. So, the verse ends with the rejoinder that on the Day of Judgment Allah shall bring all men together, and suggests that the desire to be safe from the criticism of others and the anxiety to win over them in disputes only betrays one's attachment to the temporal world, and that wisdom lies in caring more for what is everlasting.

(2) The expression "strive to excel" also indicates that one should hasten to perform a good deed (whether it be *Ṣalāh* (prayers)or *Ṣawm* (fasting) or the Ḥajj (pilgrimage) or *Ẓakāh* (giving of alms), etc.) as soon as one gets the opportunity to do so. For, the ability to do a good deed is a favour from Allah, and negligence in performing it amounts to ungratefulness and disrespect towards Allah. Hence, it is to be feared that procrastination in this matter may be punished with a withdrawal of the divine favour, and that the culprit may altogether lose the ability to perform good deeds. May Allah protect us from such a fate! The point has been made quite explicit in another verse:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ وَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَاَنَّهٗۤ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ O

> "O believers, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life; and know that Allah does (sometimes) stand between a man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be mustered" (8:24).

(3) From this very expression - "strive, then, to excel in good deeds" - some of the *fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists) have drawn the conclusion that it is more meritorious to offer each of the five daily prayers as soon as the appointed time for it begins, or as early as possible, and have even cited the *aḥādith* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in support of this view, which is shared by Imām Shāfi'i. On the other hand, the great Imām Abū Hanifah and Imām Mālik specify that it is more meritorious to offer certain prayers a bit late, as has been indicated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself through his speech or action, while the rest of the prayers should, of course, be offered as early as possible within the time prescribed. An example of the former is provided by Al-Bukhāri who reports from the blessed Companion Anas

the superior merit of offering the *'Ishā* prayers rather late in the night. The blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah also reports such a preference on the part of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself (Qurṭubī). Similarly, Al-Bukhārī and Al-Tirmidhī report from the blessed Companion Abū Dharr that in the course of a journey once the blessed Companion Bilāl رضی الله عنهم wanted to recite *Adhān* (call for prayers) as soon as the time for the *ẓuhr* prayers began, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him to wait till it was a bit cooler, and remarked that the heat of the noon-day is a part of the fire of Hell. In other words, the Holy Prophet ﷺ evidently preferred the *ẓuhr* prayers to be offered rather late in summer. On the basis of such *aḥādith*, Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām Mālik have come to the conclusion that although in the case of those prayers regarding which we have not been asked to offer them a bit late (for example, the *Maghrib* prayers), it is better to do so as soon as the appointed time begins, yet in the case of those prayers regarding which a specific indication does exist one should offer them somewhat later within the time prescribed. They add that if one wishes to act upon the commandment, "strive, then, to excel in good deeds", even in the latter case, then the only way to do so is not to delay the prayers when the desirable or commendable (*Mustaḥabb*) time has arrived.

In short, Verse 148 has, according to a consensus of all the *Fuqahā'*, established the principle that when the time for offering a prescribed prayer has arrived, one should not delay it without a valid excuse, which may either be a clear-cut specification in the Sharī'ah (as we have just defined), or a physical disability, like illness, etc.

Verses 151 - 152

كَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْكُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِنَا
وَيُزَكِّيْكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ مَّالَمْ تَكُوْنُوْا
تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ فَاذْكُرُوْنِيْٓ اَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لِيْ وَلَا تَكْفُرُوْنِ ۝

As also We have sent in your midst a messenger from among you, who recites to you Our verses, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and the wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know. Remember Me, then, and I will remember you. And be thankful to Me,

and be not ungrateful to Me. (Verses 151 - 152)

These verses conclude the discussion on the theme of the Qiblah or religious orientation. So, Verse 151 repeats the second part of the prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with which the discussion had begun (Verses 127 - 129). He had, as one would recall, prayed Allah to accept his founding of the Ka'bah, and to send among his progeny a Messenger from among themselves. The subsequent discussion on the subject of the Qiblah has already shown that the first prayer has been heard and accepted. Now, Verse 151 declares that similarly the second request has also been granted, suggesting that since the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent in answer to the prayer of the founder of the Ka'bah, it is no wonder that it should be appointed as his Qiblah. Verse 151 has specifically mentioned that the new Prophet (Muḥammad ﷺ) is sent with the same attributes as specified by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in his prayer, namely: (1) He recites to them the verses of the Qur'ān; (2) He teaches them the Book and the wisdom; (3) He purifies them; (4) He teaches them things which his listeners did not know of, nor could they be found in the earlier Divine Books or through individual reason.

Since Allah has, in granting the two prayers, sent such great blessings to mankind, Verse 152 asks men to "remember" Him as the Supreme Benefactor, and to render Him thanks by being obedient. As long as they do so, Allah will "remember" them in showering on them His material and spiritual blessings. The verse ends with the reminder that men should not be ungrateful to Allah in denying His blessings or in being disobedient.

In the light of this commentary, one can see that the word "as" (in Arabic, the letter *Kāf* which denotes a comparison between two terms) provides the link between Verse 151 and Verse 152. But, according to al-Qurṭubī, the word *Kāf* or "as" is connected with the first phrase of Verse 152 - فَاذْكُرُونِي : "Remember Me, then". Viewed in the line of this syntactical relationship, the two verses, taken together, would mean that the ability to "remember" Allah is as much a blessing for men as the ordination of the new Qiblah and the coming of the Last Prophet ﷺ, and hence it is the duty of men to render thanks to Allah, so that they may continue to receive His favours.

The merits of '*Dhikr*' (Rememberance)

ذكر : *Dhikr* or "Remembrance" essentially pertains to the heart, but in so far as the tongue is the interpreter of the heart the oral recitation of a Divine Name or a verse of the Holy Qur'ān is also described as *Dhikr*. In other words, oral *Dhikr* can be worth the name only when it is accompanied by the "remembrance" of the heart. As the great Sufi poet Rūmī points out, the recitation of a Divine Name can have no efficacy if one keeps thinking of cows and donkeys while repeating it mechanically with the tongue. One must, however, bear in mind that even a mechanical *Dhikr* without the heart being engaged in it is not altogether futile. It is related that the great Sūfī Abū 'Uthmān, hearing a man complain of such a situation, remarked that one should be grateful to Allah even for this favour of having drawn at least one organ of the body, the tongue, into His service. (Qurṭubī)

The merits of *Dhikr* are, indeed, innumerable. What greater merit could one wish for than the assurance that when a man "remembers" Allah, He too "remembers" him. Abū 'Uthmān once claimed that he knew the time when Allah remembered His servants. The listeners grew curious as to how he could determine this. He replied that, according to the promise made in the Holy Qur'ān, when a Muslim remembers Allah, He too remembers him, and thus everyone can know for himself that as soon as he turns to Allah and remembers Him, Allah too remembers him.

Let us add that Verse 152 means to say that if men "remember" Allah by obeying His commandments, He will "remember" them by granting His pardon and His rewards. The commentator Sa'id ibn Jubayr has, in fact, interpreted the *Dhikr* or "Remembrance" of Allah as obedience and submission to Him. He says:

فمن لم يطعه لم يذكره وان كثر صلاته وتسبيحه

"He who has not obeyed Him has not remembered Him, even though he has kept himself externally busy in offering (*nafl*: supererogatory) prayers and reciting His praises."

This explanation is fully supported by a *ḥadīth* cited by Al-Qurtubi on the authority of "Ahkām al-Qur'ān" by Ibn Khuwayz Mandadh. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that one who has been obeying Allah - that

is, following the injunctions with regard to the lawful (*Ḥalāl*) and the unlawful (*Ḥarām*) - has truly been remembering Allah, in spite of being deficient in (*nafl*: supererogatory) prayers and fasting, while one who has been disobeying divine commandments has, in fact, forgotten Allah, in spite of devoting long hours to *nafl* prayers, fasting and recitation of His praises.

The great Sūfī Master Dhu al-Nun al-Misrī has said that the man who remembers Allah in the full sense of the term forgets everything else, and that, in reward of such a total absorption, Allah Himself takes care of all his concerns, and grants him something far more valuable for everything he loses. Similarly, the blessed Companion Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ has remarked that in so far as winning absolution from divine wrath is concerned, no good deed on the part of man can compare with *Dhikr*. And in a *hadith* reported by the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہ , Allah Himself says that so long as the servant keeps remembering Him and his lips keep moving in *Dhikr*, Allah is with him (for a more elaborate discussion of the subject, see *Dhikrullāh* by the author).

Verse 153

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ۭاِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ۝

O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer. Surely, Allah is with those who are patient. (Verse 153)

As we have already seen, the enemies of Islam have been objecting to the change in the orientation of Qiblah, wishing to produce in the minds of the people doubts about the validity of Islam as a religion. The earlier verses have, in answering these objections, removed all such misgivings. But some of the enemies simply ignored the answers, and still persisted in their hostility. This situation was likely to dishearten the Muslims. So, the present verse nullifies such a re-action on the part of the Muslims by prescribing the method of overcoming one's grief or anxiety.

The patience and the *Ṣalāh*:

And the method consists in turning to patience and prayers, for

Allah assures us here that He is with those who are patient. This promise applies, above all, to those who offer prayers, whether *fard* (obligatory) or *nafl* (supererogatory), for prayers are the supreme form of worship.

In explaining the context, we have mentioned a specific situation, but the verse, in fact, identifies the elixir for all the ills which are a necessary part of human existence, whether they be wants and needs, or anxiety and suffering. The Holy Qur'ān itself has indicated; in a very subtle and eloquent way, the general efficacy of this remedy by employing a generalizing expression - "seek help" - without specifying the situation in which help is to be sought. (Maẓharī)

Now, the two ingredients of this remedy are patience and prayers. The Arabic term *Ṣabr* (صبر) is much more comprehensive than its usual English equivalent, "patience". Lexically, the word "*Ṣabr*" signifies "restraining oneself, or keeping oneself under control." In the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Ṣabr* has three modes:-

(1) Restraining oneself from what the Sharī'ah has declared to be illegal or impermissible (*Ḥarām*).

(2) Forcing oneself to be regular in the observance of the different forms of worship and to be steadfast in obeying the commandments of Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

(3) To endure all kinds of trouble and pain - in other words, to understand clearly and to believe that it is the will of Allah to make one suffer, and to hope that one shall receive a reward for this suffering. With regard to this last point, let us add that, on the authority of the commentator Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Kathīr says that if one cannot help uttering a word of grief or a sigh of pain, it does not go against *Ṣabr*, or nullify it.

People generally identify *Ṣabr* with the third mode alone, and ignore the first two which are, indeed, more basic and essential. We cannot insist too much on the fact that all the three are equally obligatory, and that every Muslim is required to practice all the three forms of *Ṣabr*. In the terminology of Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Al-Ṣābirūn* is the title of those who are steadfast in observing all the three forms with equal rigour. According to the *Ḥadīth*, people will

hear a call on the Day of Judgment, "Where are the *Ṣābirūn*?"; at this, those who had been constant in observing the three forms of *Ṣabr* will stand up, and they will be allowed to enter Paradise without having to present the account of their deeds. In citing this *ḥadīth*, Ibn Kathīr points out that it is corroborated by the Holy Qur'ān itself: إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّٰبِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ : "The *Ṣābirūn* shall certainly receive their full reward without reckoning." (39:10)

As for the second ingredient of the prescription, it is *Ṣalāh* (Prayer). Although *Ṣabr*, as we have just explained it, covers the different forms of worship, including prayers, all of them being its branches. *Ṣalāh*, however, has been mentioned separately, because that is the most perfect model of *Ṣabr*. For, in the state of *Ṣalāh*, one binds oneself to obedience and worship, and restrains oneself not only from all that is sinful or reprehensible but even from what is otherwise permissible - e.g., from eating or drinking or talking. Hence, *Ṣalāh* is a visible demonstration of *Ṣabr* which signifies keeping oneself under control in shunning everything sinful and in submitting oneself totally to obedience.

A remedy to all problems

Moreover, *Ṣalāh* does possess a special efficacy in releasing man from all kinds of trouble and pain, and in fulfilling all his needs. We may not be able to explain it rationally, but the efficacy is present as a characteristic quality in the very nature of prayers - as happens in the case of certain medicines too. But the efficacy shows itself only when prayers are offered in the proper way and according to the physical and spiritual etiquette laid down by the Sharī'ah. If our prayers seem to be fruitless, it is because we have been deficient in observing this etiquette, and have not turned to Allah in single-minded devotion and total submission. Let us not forget that, according to the *Ḥadīth*, whenever the Holy Prophet ﷺ was faced with a grave problem of any kind, he always hastened to offer *nafl* prayers, and through the *barakah* (benediction) of the prayers Allah came to his aid and resolved the problem satisfactorily.

As to how *Ṣabr* can save man from all kinds of trouble and pain and resove all his difficulties, the secret has been revealed in the last phrase of this verse - "Surely, Allah is with those who are patient."

That is to say, as a reward for *Ṣabr* man receives the honour of the "company" of Allah. And it goes without saying that when the might of the Lord of the Worlds Himself has come to the aid of a man, what pain or trouble can overcome him, and who can prevent his concerns from prospering?

Verses 154 - 157

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُّقْتَلُ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتٌ ؕ بَلْ اَحْيَآءٌ وَّلٰكِنْ
لَّا تَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَىْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوْعِ وَنَقْصٍ
مِّنَ الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ۝ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ
اَصَابَتْهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ ۝ اُولٰٓئِكَ
عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوٰتٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۟ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُوْنَ ۝

And do not say of those who are slain in the way of Allah that they are dead. Instead, they are alive, but you perceive not. And surely We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger, and loss in wealth and lives and fruits. And give good tidings to the patient who, when suffering comes to them, say: "We certainly belong to Allah, and to Him we are bound to return." Those are the ones upon whom there are blessings from their Lord, and mercy. And those are the ones who are on the right path. (Verses 154 - 157)

Earlier, alluding to an unpleasant incident, patience and steadfastness were inculcated and the excellence of *Ṣābirūn* (the patient people) was mentioned. The next verses mention, in some detail, other unpleasant incidents and culminate in describing the excellence of patience, and perseverance in it. Those verses give preference to the theme of war with infidels over other themes for two reasons: first, the sacrifice of life is a grand sacrifice; whoever steadfastly endures this loss will, undoubtedly, learn to be patient on losses of lesser magnitude; second, it is relevant to the situation too, as the objectionist on the orientation of Ka'bah had been facing it.

Injunctions and related considerations:

According to Islamic traditions the dead person is given some kind of a "new life" in *Barzakh*[44] which develops in him a sensitivity to punishment and reward. Regardless of whether one is a believer or disbeliever, virtuous or vicious, this taste of life-in-*Barzakh* is given to everybody. However, the life there has many categories: one of them is for the general lot, while some others are for prophets and virtuous people. The later ones vary in their degree of excellence. A number of scholars have collected relevant facts to assert their points of views about the life-in-*Barzakh*. All of them cannot be summed up here. I will restrict myself here, to presenting the considered and the very balanced view of my worthy teacher Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī of Thāna Bhawan; incidentally, his view is in close conformity with the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān, as also, those of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Martyrs are not dead

One who dies in the cause of Allah is a *Shahīd* (Martyr) and, although, it is correct and even allowed to call him "dead", yet we are forbidden to regard their death like ordinary deaths. For, though, life in *Barzakh* is given to everybody which gives him perception of reward and punishment but *Shahīd* in the *Barzakh* life is qualitatively different from the one given to other persons. The distinction a *Shahīd* has over others in *Barzakh* is that in effect, for the fullness and sensitivity of life, his perception is, keener and deeper. As, for instance, the life sensation is there in finger tips, as also, it is there in heels, but the sensitivity of finger tips is sharper than that of heels. The effect of the finer life-quality of a *Shahīd* in *Barzakh* reaches his physical body as well; whereas ordinarily bodies remain unaffected. Consequently, a *Shahīd's* body does not waste away, decay or mingle with dust. On the contrary it retains it freshness and a semblance of being alive too. This is duly endorsed by *Aḥādīth* and observations. They are, therefore, reported as living and we are forbidden to call them dead. However, for all worldly purposes

44. An intermediary stage which begins with death and stretches till the Doomsday.

they are treated at par with the dead; their properties are divided and their wives can remarry. Lives of prophets in *Barzakh* have a further distinction. Their life-sensitivity is even finer and keener than that of *Shahīds*. In *Barzakh* their bodies retain their life-quality and, in some ways, its manifestation is extended to this life as well; their properties are not divided and their wives cannot again enter into wedlock.

The most strong in the retention of this life-quality are the prophets, then are the *Shahīds*, then the ordinary human beings. Nevertheless, according to some *aḥādīth* some of the men of Allah and virtuous people share this excellence with *Shahīds*. Apparently, those who die while exercising stringent discipline against their selves (مجاهدة النفس) are ranked with *Shahīds*. In other words, though this verse specifically refers to *Shahīds* as against the broad humanity, it does not, for that reason, exclude the virtuous and the truthful. If, therefore, the body of a *Shahīd* returns to dust, as bodies of ordinary persons, generally do, the chances are that the person did not, perhaps, die in the cause of Allah which is the only criterion of martyrdom (*Shahādah*).

In case a person who fulfilled all the prerequisites of martyrdom and, beyond, any doubt, died in the cause of Allah and whose martyrdom (*Shahādah*) has been unmistakably and repeatedly demonstrated, his body must not, on the authority of a *ḥadīth*, return to dust. If, in spite of *Aḥādīth*, the body mingles with earth (what, in fact, has made the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī doubt is how can, in spite of *Aḥādīth*, the body of a *Shahīd* be eaten away by earth) the explanation would be that according to *Ḥadīth* the body would not return to dust; however, it does not deny the process of decay and decomposition caused by other factors like geo-chemical reaction, body enzymes, and bacteria. Niether does it confute the verse.

Other compound objects like weapons, medicines, food, and the commingling of various natural elements like water, fire and air had, undoubtedly, their effects on the bodies of prophets in this world and, obviously, the life-quality of *Shahīd* in *Barzakh* is not superior to that of the prophets in this world; if, therefore, the other ingredients register their impact on the bodies of *Shahīds* in *Barzakh* it does not

confute, in any sense, the meanings of *Ahādīth* which say the *Shahīds'* bodies are sacred to earth.

Another answer is that the distinction which *Shahīds* have over others is apparent from the fact that, comparatively, their bodies remain unspoiled for a pretty long time, although the liklihood of their disentegration in the longer run does exist. The aim of the *hadīth* should, therefore, be explained by saying that the immunity from decay for such a long time is, in itself, an excess on the customary behaviour of dead bodies. Eternal preservation, and preservation for a considerable long time, both are an "excess on the customary behaviour" of dead bodies.

By the words, " لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ": "you perceive not", the Holy Qur'ān asserts the fact that the life in *Barzakh* transcends all sensory perceptions.

Patience in hardship: The way to make it easy

The nature and the significance of the severe test man is put to by Allah has been thoroughly discussed while explaining the verse وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰٓ إِبْرٰهِمَ رَبُّهُ: 'And when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test'.

Whatever their magnitude, accidents are unnerving. But a prior knowledge of such accidents makes it easier to bear them and be patient about them. Since the entire *Ummah* is addressed here, the *Ummah* should realize that the world is a place of hardships and labour; it is a place of ordeal. It will not, therefore, amount to impatience if one does regard such accidents as either strange or a remote chance. And as the *Ummah*, generally, displays the spirit of patience in all its deeds, the reward of Mercy is common to everyone who strives to be patient. But as the quality and degree of patience varies from person to person, everyone will be rewarded individually according to and commensurate with his quality of patience.

A formula of peace in hardship

That the patient people used to recite: إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُونَ: 'We belong to Allah and to Him we are to return' is, in fact, an inculcation of the principle of virtue. The suggestion is that this is what the patient people should say as it brings excellent reward, relieves from the burden of sorrow and suffering and consoles effectively the grieved heart.

Verse 158

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

Indeed the Ṣafā and the Marwah are among the marks from Allah. So whoever comes to the House for Ḥajj or performs the 'Umrah, there is no sin for him if he makes rounds between them; whoever comes up on his own with good, so Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing. (Verse 158)

The subject of the Ka'bah, as we would do well to recollect, started all the way back from Verse 124 وَاِذِابْتَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ رَبُّهٗ : 'And when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test', later opening with the statement that the Ka'bah was made a place for repeated convergence, a sanctuary, and a centre of divine worship as ordained (125). Then came the famous prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in which he requested Allah Almighty that he and his people be initiated into the correct method of performing the *manāsik*, the required rites, or acts of worship (126 - 129); which is inclusive of the Ḥajj and 'Umrah. We can now see that the centrality of the House of Allah as the place of worship has been expressed manifestly when it was declared to be the Qiblah, the direction and orientation of all *Ṣalāh*, no matter where it is performed; while at the same time, the importance of the House of Allah was established when it was made the objective in the performance of the Ḥajj and 'Umrah.

The present verse opens with the solemn declaration that the two hills, *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* adjoining the Ka'bah in Makkah, are tangible signs from Allah. Pilgrims walk briskly between them after they have made the *tawaf* of the Holy Ka'bah. This act of walking briskly or "making rounds" between them, as the Qur'an elects to call it, is known as *Sa'y*: سَعْی , a practice which was there even in the *Jāhiliyyah* and which made Muslims doubt its propriety. It is exactly this doubt Allah Almighty aims to remove here.

So, there it was in the earlier treatment of the subject that Allah Almighty eliminated the objection raised by disbelievers against the

instituting of the Ka'bah as the Qiblah of Muslim *Ṣalāh* and here, through a correlated assertion, the doubt of Muslims themselves as to the propriety of *Sa'y* in the Ḥajj and 'Umrah, of which the Ka'bah is the desired hub, has been removed.

That the text is closely bound together by this reason is not difficult to see.

Some terms and their meanings

1. The term, *Sha'ā'ir* in شَعَائِرِ اللّٰه is the plural form of *Sha'īrah:* شعيره which means a sign, mark or token. So, the "*Sha'ā'ir* of Allah" signify what He has determined to be the marks of Islamic faith.

2. Lexically, Ḥajj means to aim, to intend; while, in the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Hadīth*, the act of deciding to go solely on a pilgrimage of the House of Allah and performing required rites while there, is called the Ḥajj.

3. Lexically, 'Umrah means *ziyārah* or pilgrimage; while, in the terminology of the Sharī'ah, the visit to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* and the doing of *tawāf* and *sa'y* there is called 'Umrah.

***Sa'y* between Safā and Marwah is Obligatory**

Details of the method that governs the performance of the Ḥajj, 'Umrah and *Sa'y* are easily available in books of *Fiqh*. It may be noted that *Sa'y* is a *mustaḥabb* (desirable or commendable) practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ according to Imam Ahmad; a *fard* (absolute obligation) according to Imāms Mālik and Shafi'ī; and a *wājib* (necessity) according to Imām Abū Hanīfah, which means, one who abandons it would have to slaughter a goat in compensation.

It is advisable to guard against a possible doubt that may arise while reading the words used in the verse under study. One may think that the Qur'ān simply says that making Sa'y between Safā and Marwah is 'no sin'; at the most, it proves that it is one of the many 'allowed' acts. This approach can be corrected by looking at the leading expression لَاجُنَاحَ :'no sin' which has been used here in relation to a question. The question related to all those idols sitting on top of the Safā and Marwah hills and it was to show their devotion to them that the people of the *Jāhiliyyah* used to do *sa'y* between Safā and Marwah,

and in which case, this practice should be *ḥarām* (forbidden). It is in answer to this doubt that it was declared, "there is no sin" in it. This being the real and authentic Abrahamic Tradition, there is no reason why it should be considered tainted with 'sin'? The 'malpractice' of a pagan band of people in this intervening period does not end up making a 'sin' of what is 'good' in the sight of Allah. The use of the expression 'no sin', therefore, does not go against its being *wājib* or necessary.

Verses 159 - 162

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالْهُدٰى مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا بَيَّنّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتٰبِ أُولٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ
اللّٰعِنُونَ ۝ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُوا فَأُولٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ
كُفَّارٌ أُولٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝
خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ۝

Surely, those who conceal what We have revealed of clear signs and guidance - even after We have explained them for people, in the Book, upon them Allah casts damnation, and curse them those who curse. Yet, those who repent and correct and declare, their repentance I accept. And I am the most Relenting, the most Merciful. Indeed, those who disbelieved and died while they were disbelievers; upon them is the curse of Allah, and of angels, and of all human beings together, remaining therein forever. Neither will the punishment be lightened for them, nor will they be given respite. (Verses 159-162)

As part of the debated issue of Qiblah several verses earlier, the text has pointed out how the people of the Book went about concealing the truth concerning the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ for whom the Ka'bah was appointed as the Qiblah. It was Verse 146, where it was said:

ٱلَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَٰهُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ يَعْرِفُونَهُۥ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ ٱلْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

"Those whom We have given the Book recognize him (The Holy Prophet) as they recognize their own sons. And, in fact, a group of them does conceal the truth while they know."

Now the text, in order to conclude the subject, warns those who not only conceal the truth but, going further ahead in obstinacy, persist in their effort. The ultimate fate of this senseless persistence being all too obvious, Allah Almighty still extends the promise of His mercy and forgiveness to those who repent and reflect on what they did, retrace their steps and correct their negative attitude towards divine truth and, in order to demonstrate their positive stand, come forward and state the truth clearly and publicly. The natural consequence of such a reformed attitude would be that they will enter the fold of Islam believing in Allah and His prophet, which is the touchstone for any disbeliever's honest change of heart.

The duty of spreading the Islamic Knowledge

Verse 159 above stated that concealing from people clear signs and guidance revealed by Allah Almighty is a terrible crime which earns the curse of Allah Almighty Himself, as well as that of His entire creation. Let us point out to some injunctions that issue forth from this verse:

1. It is forbidden to conceal knowledge which must be disclosed and disseminated widely. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

من سئل عن علم يعلمه فكتمه الجمه الله يوم القيامة بلجام من النار

"Anyone who is asked about something (of religion) which he knows would, in the event that he conceals it, be brought forth by Allah on the Doomsday harnessed with a rein of fire." (Narrated by Abu Hurayrah and 'Amr ibn al-'As and reported by Ibn Majah - Qurṭubī)

According to the *fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists), this warning applies to a person who is the only one available in a given situation. If there are other knowledgeable persons present, he has the option of suggesting that the issue may be discussed with an *'ālim* who knows. (Qurṭubī and Jaṣṣāṣ)

2. Another very important rule that emerges from here is that one who himself does not possess the sound knowledge of religious injunctions and rulings should not try to explain them.

3. The third rule we find out is that answers to religious questions which are intricate, deeply involved and way beyond the comprehension level of common people should not be offered before them lest they fall a prey to some misunderstanding. This will not be considered as 'concealment of knowledge' since what is not allowed is the concealment of clear guidance given in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* which it is rather necessary to disclose and disseminate widely. The expression مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالْهُدٰى : "of clear signs and guidance" in this verse releases a strong suggestion to this effect. It was about such questions that the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd had said: 'If you recite *aḥādīth* which people do not understand fully, you will be throwing them into a nest of discord.' (Qurṭubī)

As reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has said: 'Disclose to the common people only that much of knowledge as they have the capacity to understand. Do you want them to deny Allah and His Messenger?' For, anything beyond their comprehension would breed doubts in their minds and the possibility is there that they may refuse to accept it.

This leads us to the rule that it is the responsibility of an *'ālim*, a religious scholar or a guide, to talk to people after he has assessed their ability to receive what is to be communicated. Such questions should not be brought up before a person who is likely to fall in error or misunderstanding. It is for this reason that Muslim jurists, while discussing such questions in writing, conclude with a standard warning tag of هذا مما يعرف ولا يعرف which means that the question under discussion is sensitive, therefore, a scholar should limit it to his comprehension and refrain from broadcasting it in public. It is reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

لاتمنعوا الحكمة اهلها فتظلموهم ولا تضعوها فى غير اهلها فتظلموها

"Do not withhold wisdom from those who deserve it, for if you do so, you will be unjust to them; and do not place it before those who do not deserve it, for if you do so, you will be unjust to it."

In view of these details, Imām al-Qurṭubī has deduced the ruling that an infidel who appears in polemics against Muslims - or a heresiarch (*mubtadi'*) who, being a combination of the heretic and the schismatic, invites people to his misleading ideas - should not be initiated into the Islamic disciplines unless it is absolutely ascertained that such teaching would correct his thinking.

Similarly, the executive authority of a time should not be given rulings which they could misuse to unleash a reign of terror over their citizens. Similarly again, the 'leaves' (*rukhsah*) given in religious injunctions and the stratagems (*ḥīlah*, plural: *ḥiyal*) should not be brought forth in public unnecessarily lest people get used to being 'excuse-seekers' while acting upon the injunctions of the faith. (Qurṭubī)

The *Ḥadīth* is equal to the Qur'ān by implication

The blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah, as reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, has said: 'If this verse of the Qur'ān were not there, I would have not related a single *ḥadīth* before you.' The verse referred to here is the present verse which carries the warning of curse on concealment of knowledge. Some other Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, have been reported to have used similar words while narrating *Ḥadīth*.

These narrations tell us that in the view of the blessed Companions, the *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ enjoys some privileges mentioned in relation to the Qur'an. It may be noted that the verse in question warns those who may conceal what has been revealed in the Holy Qur'ān; it does not mention *Ḥadīth* as such. But, the blessed Companions ruled that the *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was covered under this reference to the Qur'ān and that is why they thought that concealing the *Ḥadīth* would also put them under this warning.

The evil consequences of some sins

The exact words of the Holy Qur'ān in وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰعِنُوْنَ :'And curse them those who curse', as obvious, have not identified those who do that. Commentators *Mujāhid* and *'Ikrimah* have said that this absence of specification suggests that they are cursed by every thing and every living being, so much so, that all animals and insects join in since their misdeeds hurt all created life forms. This is supported by a *ḥadīth*

from the blessed Companion, Barā' ibn 'Āzib where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said that the word *al-lā'inūn* ('those who curse') refers to all animal life that moves on the earth. (Qurṭubī quoting Ibn Majah)

Cursing an individual is not permissible

From the words of the text وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ :'and died while they were disbelievers', commentators al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Qurṭubī and some others have formulated the view that it is not permissible to curse an infidel about whom it is not certain that he is to die in a state of infidelity. Now that we have no way of finding out for sure that a person will die in a given state, we are bound to obey the ruling that it is not permissible to curse an infidel by name. That the Holy Prophet ﷺ has cursed some infidels by name is explained by the fact that their death in a state of infidelity was divinely revealed to him. As far as the infidels as a whole are concerned, including the tyrants and the unjust, it is technically correct, if cursed without any particularization.

From this we also find out that the act of cursing is so grave that it has been disallowed even if the target be an infidel about whom it is not certain that he is going to die as one. If so, how can this become permissible if the target is a Muslim or, even if it is directed at an animal? Common people in Muslim societies seem to neglect this aspect of standard Muslim behaviour, specially our Muslim sisters who are prone to use very hard language about those they do not like among the circle of their acquaintances. It should be clearly understood that the act of cursing becomes effective not only by using the word, 'curse' but all synonyms used are subject to the same ruling. The word *'La'nah'* (curse) means: 'to remove away from the mercy of Allah Almighty'. Therefore, all damnatory swearing and cursing, whatever the shade, circumstance or language, falls under the purview of "*la'nah*" or 'curse'.

Verses 163 - 164

وَإِلٰهُكُمْ إِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ إِنَّ فِى خَلْقِ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِى
تَجْرِى فِى الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ

مِنْ مَّآءٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ

وَّتَصْرِيْفِ الرِّيٰحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ

لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ○

And your god is one God: There is no god but He, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful. Surely, in the creation of heavens and earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail in the sea with what benefits men, and the water Allah sent down from the sky, then revived with it the earth after its being dead, and spread over it of each creature, and in the turning of winds, and in the clouds employed to serve between heaven and earth: there are signs for those who have sense. (Verses 163 - 164)

When the *mushrikīn*, (the associators) of Arabia heard the verse وَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ : 'And your god is one God', all against their own belief, they were puzzled thinking how could there be just one single object of worship for the whole wide world. If this was a serious claim, there has to be some proof in support. That proof has been tersely encased in the present two verses.

Understanding *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah, in the wider sense:

Tauḥīd, the cardinal principle of Muslim faith as stated in Verse 163 has been proved repeatedly and variously, therefore, we limit ourselves at this point to a summary view of the principle as follows:

1. He is One in the state of His being, that is, there exists in the universe of His creation no entity like Him. He is without any duplicate or replica and without any equal or parallel. Such unshared and pristine is His station that He alone is deserving of being called the *Wāḥid*, the One.

2. He is One in claiming the right of being worshipped, that is, in view of the nature of His Being, the comprehensiveness of His most perfect attributes and the great charisma of His creation and its nurture, all human obedience, all *'ibādah*, all worship has to be for Him alone.

3. He is One in being free of any conceivable composition, that is, He is free of segments and fragments, units and organs, substances and elements, atoms and particles. There is just no way He can be analyzed or divided or resolved.

4. He is One in being the anterior and the posterior, that is, He existed when nothing did and He will remain existing when nothing will. Who then, if not Him, shall be called the *Wāḥid*, the only One? (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Now in Verse 164, there is a series of signs and proofs in support of the premise that Allah Almighty is really One. Stated simply, these can be grasped by the learned and the ignorant alike. How can one bypass the wonder of the creation of the heavens and the earth? Who can ignore the constant alternation of the night and the day? The message is simple and clear. Their origination and their perpetuity is the work of His perfect power alone and that there is absolutely no being other than Him who can take that credit.

Similarly, the movement of boats on the surface of waters, is a formidable indicator of Allah's power which gave water, a substance so liquid and fluid, the property of lifting on its back ships which carry tons and tons of weight all the way from the East to the West. Then, there is the movement of winds which Allah harnesses into the service of man, and in His wisdom, keeps changing their direction. These are great signs; they tell us that they were created and operated by a supreme being, the One who is All-Knowing, All-Aware, All-Wise. If the substance of water was not given a state in which the molecules move freely among themselves while remaining in one mass, a functional fluidity in other words, all this maritime activity would not be there. Even if this fluidity of sea-surface was there, help from winds was still needed in order to cover all those thousands of nautical miles across the seas of the world. The Holy Qur'ān has summarized the subject by saying:

إِنْ يَّشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلٰى ظَهْرِهٖ

"If He wills, He can still the winds, then, ships shall remain standing on the back of the seas." (42:33)

The use of the expression بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ :'with what benefits men' points

out to the countless benefits that accrue to human beings when they mutually trade their goods through sea freighters. It is interesting to keep in mind the variations these benefits take from country to country and from age to age.

Then comes the marvel of water descending from the sky, drop by drop, released in a measure and manner that it hurts nothing. If it always came in the form of a flood, nothing would have survived, man or animal or things. Then, the raining of water is not all; it is the storage of water on earth that baffles the human ingenuity. Risking a simplicity, let us imagine if everyone was asked to store for personal use a quota of water for six month, how would everyone manage that? Even if such an impossible storage was somehow done, how could it be made to remain potable and hygienic all this time? Allah Almighty, in His infinite mercy, took care of this too. The Holy Qur'ān says:

فَاَسْكَنّٰهُ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَاِنَّا عَلٰى ذَهَابٍۢ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ O

'Then, We made water stay in the earth, although, We were capable of letting it flow away,' (23:18)

But, nature did not allow this to happen. For the inhabitants of the earth, human and animal, water was stored in ponds and lakes openly. Then, the same water was lowered into the earth under the mountains and valleys in the form of an unsensed network of hidden pipelines of water accessible to everyone taking the trouble of digging and finding water. Further still, is it not that a huge sea of ice was stored out on top of the mountain ranges which is secure against spoilage and melts out slowly reaching all over the world through nature's own water lines.

To sum up, it can be said that Allah's Oneness has been proved in these verses with the citation of some manifestations of His perfect power. Commentators of the Qur'ān have taken up this subject in great details. Those interested may see al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Qurṭubī and others.

Verse 165

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا يُّحِبُّوْنَهُمْ كَحُبِّ

اللّٰهِ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّٰهِ ۗ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اِذْ
يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ ۙ اَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعَذَابِ O

Among the people there are some who set up, aside from Allah, parallels whom they love as if it be the love of Allah, yet those who believe are most firm in love for Allah. Only if those who have acted unjustly would see - when they see the punishment - that all power belongs to Allah alone and Allah is severe in punishment. (Verse 165)

In the verses that appeared earlier, there was a strong and positive view of Allah's Oneness. Now the present verse points out to the error made by those who associate others in the divinity of Allah and think that they are caretakers of their needs. Their attachment to them reaches the proportions of love that is due for Allah alone.

In direct contrast to this profile of the polytheists, there are the true believers who love Allah alone, and very staunchly too, for a polytheist may turn away from his self-made god in the event of an impending loss, but a true believer reposes his total confidence in Allah, in gain and loss alike, retaining His love and pleasure as his lasting possession, never leaving his Creator whatever the odds against him be.

Now, returning back to the 'unjust', the Holy Qur'ān makes a subtle suggestion that the opportunity to correct their position was there; they could have recognized through their frustrations with their gods that they were helpless and that real power rested with Allah. But, they missed the opportunity and must now learn the hard way. So, the stern warning.

Verses 166 - 167

اِذْ تَبَرَّاَ الَّذِيْنَ اتُّبِعُوْا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْا وَرَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ
وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْاَسْبَابُ O وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْا لَوْ اَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً
فَنَتَبَرَّاَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوْا مِنَّا ۗ كَذٰلِكَ يُرِيْهِمُ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ
حَسَرٰتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَمَا هُمْ بِخٰرِجِيْنَ مِنَ النَّارِ O

When those who were followed disown those who followed, and they see the punishment and the bonds between them will be cut asunder! And those who followed would say, "We wish there be a return for us, so that we may disown them as they have disowned us." Thus Allah makes them see their deeds as remorse for them. And they are not to come out from the Fire. (Verses 166 - 167)

Towards the end of the preceding verse it was said that the punishment of the Hereafter is severe. How severe it will be is now the subject of the present verse.

The severity of the punishment against which the polytheists have been warned will unfold itself when their leaders whom they followed will disown them as their votaries; and they both, the leaders and the led, will witness the punishment, and whatever bonds of leading and following may have existed between them would be snapped apart, very much like it happens in our mortal world when people share in the illegal but wriggle out when apprehended, so much so, that they would even go to the limit of refusing to recognize their accomplices!

When the so-called 'people' of their leaders will see this turnabout of theirs, they will fret and fume but will be unable to do anything about it except wishing that there be a return for them to the mortal world where they could, at least, square up with their greasy leaders - 'May be this time they come back to us seeking our allegiance which would be a perfect time to say no to them and to distance ourselves from them and to do to them what they did to us.'

But, what price are these dreams now? They are not going anywhere. They are stuck with 'their deeds which they see as remorse', and they all, the leaders and their followers, 'are not to come out from the Fire', since the punishment for shirk, the grave sin of associating partners with Allah, is to remain in the Fire for ever.

Verses 168 - 169

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوْا مِمَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا

خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ○ اِنَّمَا يَاْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوْۗءِ
وَالْفَحْشَاۗءِ وَاَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ○

O people, eat of what is in the earth, permissible and good, and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan; indeed, for you he is an open enemy. He only orders you evil and immodesty, and that you allege about Allah what you do not know. (Verses 168 - 169)[45]

The meaning of the words

The real meaning of the root word حل (*ḥalla*) in (*halālan ṭayyiban*: حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا : permissible and good) is 'to open a knot'. In that sense, what has been made *ḥalāl* means that a knot has been opened and the restriction has been removed. The blessed Companion Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رضی اللہ عنہ has said: "Salvation depends on three things - eating *halal*, fulfilling (divine) obligations and following the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ." The word طَيِّب (*tayyib*) means 'good' as inclusive of the clean and the pure and covers the twin aspects of being lawful, permissible or *ḥalāl* and being naturally desirable.

The word خُطُوٰت (*khuṭuwāt*) is the plural form of خطوہ (*khuṭwah*) which is the distance between the two feet when striding. Here the *khuṭuwāt* of *Shayṭān* means Satanic deeds.

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45. The previous verses refuted beliefs held by the *mushrikīn*; the present verses take up the ill effects of some of their pagan practices.

One of these was to release animals dedicated to their idols, whom they treated as sacred, refusing to derive any benefit from them. They took it to be unlawful. Straying further on, they even took this act of theirs as obedience of the divine will, a source of pleasing their Creator through the intercession of their idols.

It is in this background that Allah Almighty has given the right guidance in the present verse. Eating or using what Allah has provided on this earth - all that is good, pure and permissible - is the best rule. Avoiding something permissible on the assumption that doing so will please Allah is a Satanic thought. So, 'do not follow in the footsteps of Satan' who is an open enemy and what can you hope from an enemy but that he would keep pushing you towards the evil and the immodest, and that you attribute to Allah something for which you have no authority.

The word *sū'* in السُّوْءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ means something which bothers somebody good and reasonable. The word *fahshā'* covers what is immodest. Some commentators have said that *su'* here signifies sin as such, and *fahshā'* signifies major sins.

The expression إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ (*innamā ya'murukum*: 'he only orders you') means instigating a suggestion in the heart. The meaning can be seen more clearly in a *ḥadīth* from the blessed Companion 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud who said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "The son of Ādam is influenced by a suggestion from the Satan and a suggestion from the angel. The Satanic suggestion has the effect of bringing forth the expedient gains in evil deeds and thereby opening the avenues of negating the truth, while the angelic suggestion promises reward and success for good deeds and leaves the happy effect of a heart in peace at its attestation of the truth."

Injunctions and Rulings

1. Polytheistic practices, such as releasing animals in the name of idols or dedicating them, whether big or small, to a saint or to anyone other than Allah has been declared unlawful in Verse 173 which follows. The present Verse (168) is not negating the unlawfulness of such an animal as wrongly conceived by some people. The objective of the verse is to stress that animals which Allah has made lawful should not be made unlawful by dedicating them to idols. Let them be what they are and use them for personal benefit. Why go about making things unlawful on your own which is a grave sin, and when it is dedicated to someone other than Allah it becomes impure and what is impure is unlawful.

2. If anyone dedicates an animal to anyone other than Allah out of ignorance or carelessness and wishes to make amends, he should resolve to retreat from his misdeed and repent on what he did, in which case, the meat of that animal will become lawful for him.

Verses 170 - 171

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَآ أَلْفَيْنَا
عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ○

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِىْ يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً
وَّنِدَاءً صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْىٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ 0

And when it is said to them: "Follow what Allah has sent down," they say: "Instead, we would follow what we found our fathers on." Is it so - even though their fathers used to understand nothing, nor had they been on the right path? The parable of those who disbelieve is like the one who hears nothing but a call and cry. They are deaf, dumb and blind, so they sense not. (Verses 170 - 171)

When these *mushrik* people were asked to follow the injunctions revealed by Allah through His Messenger, they refused to do so and insisted that they would rather follow the customary practice they had inherited from their fathers because, as they assumed, their models were divinely appointed to follow the way they adopted. Allah Almighty refutes this position of theirs by asking how could they go on following the ways of their fathers, under all conditions, to the exclusion of all other ways, even if their fathers did not understand much about the true faith, nor were they blessed with guidance given by their Lord?

In their lack of understanding, the verse says that the disbelievers resemble the scenario of a person shouting his call to an animal who hears nothing meaningful or significant except a bland cry. The disbelievers, in that state, do hear but not what is intended to correct them, so they are called 'deaf'; and they are tight-lipped when it comes to accepting the truth, therefore, they are 'dumb'; and since they do not see their benefit or loss, they are 'blind'. Consequently, with their vital senses so dulled, they seem to understand nothing.

Comments on the nature of *Taqlid*:

No doubt, this verse (170) does censure the blind following of forefathers, but at the same time, it provides a rule and its attending conditions proving that following has its permissible aspect which has been indicated in لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ (even though their forefathers used to understand nothing) and لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ (nor had they been on the right path). It is from here that we find out that following the forefathers

mentioned in the text of the Qur'ān was censured because they lacked reason and guidance. 'Guidance' or the right path signifies injunctions revealed by Allah Almighty, openly and clearly, while *'aql* or reason stands for imperative guidance deduced by the great armed vision of *Ijtihād* from the recognized sources of Islamic Sharī'ah.

Now we can see that following the model of those identified in the text cannot be permitted because they do not have a revealed set of laws from Allah, nor do they have the ability to deduce injunctions from the Word of Allah. There is a subtle hint here which we would do well to note. In case, we are satisfied that a certain *'ālim* has the perfect knowledge of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and in the absence of a clear and direct instruction of the two sacred sources, he has the great expertise of a *mujtahid* so that he can, by analogical deduction, arrive at rulings from the texts of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* - then, it is permissible to follow such *mujtahid 'ālim*. It does not mean that one has to obey 'his' injunctions and follow 'his person.' Instead, it means that one has to obey the injunctions of Allah alone to the total exclusion of others. But, since a direct and trustworthy knowledge of the injunctions of Allah (in all their ramifications) is not readily available to us due to our ignorance, we have to follow a *mujtahid 'ālim* in order to act in accordance with the injunctions of Allah Almighty.

From what has been said above, it becomes clear that those who hasten to quote verses of this nature against following the great *mujtahid imāms*, are themselves unaware of the proven meaning of these verses.

In his comments on this verse, the great commentator, al-Qurṭubī has said that the prohibition of following forefathers mentioned in this verse refers to following them in false beliefs and deeds. The aspect of following correct beliefs and good deeds is not included here as it has been very clearly projected in Sūrah Yūsuf in the words of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام :

إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُم بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ۝ وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَاءِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ

"I have disassociated myself from the community of people

> who do not believe in Allah and who deny the Hereafter and I have chosen to follow the community of my fathers, Ibrāhīm and Ishāq and Ya'qūb. (12:37-38)

This is good enough to prove that following forefathers in what is false is forbidden while it is permissible, rather desirable, in what is true.

Al-Qurṭubī has taken up the issue of following the *mujtahid imāms* within his comments on this verse. He says:

تعلق قوم بهذه الآية فى ذمّ التقليد (الى) وهذا فى الباطل صحيح امّا التقليد فى الحق فأصل من أصول الدين وعصمة من عصم المسلمين يلجأ إليها الجاهل المقصّر عن درك النظر

> "Some people have quoted this verse to support their criticism against *Taqlīd* (following). As far as following the false is concerned, this is correct. But, this has nothing to do with following what is true which is, in fact, a basic religious principle, and a great means of protecting the religion of Muslims in as much as one who does not have the ability to do Ijtihād must rely on 'following' in matters of religion." (Volume 2, Page 194)

Verses 172 - 173

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لِلّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ۝ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَ الدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَاۤ اُهِلَّ بِهٖ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَلَاۤ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝

O those who believe, eat of the good things We have provided you and be grateful to Allah, if (really) you are to worship Him alone. He has only forbidden you: carrion, blood, the flesh of swine and that upon which a name other than 'Allah' has been invoked. So whoever is compelled by necessity, neither seeking pleasure nor transgressing, then there is no sin on him. Verily, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (Verses 172 - 173)

Earlier, the aim was to correct the error made by the *mushrikīn*

when they made unlawful what was good and permissible. Now, in the present Verse (172), the believers are being warned against falling into the same error. As a corollary, they are reminded of Allah's blessings and are taught to be grateful to Him.

Later, in Verse 173 it is said that the prohibited must remain prohibited and should never be treated as lawful, something the *mushrikīn* used to do when they ate carrion or animals slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah. Also implied is the warning that it is an error to declare any animal, other than those specified, as unlawful.

Comments on juristic details follow.

The effects of eating *Ḥalāl* and *Ḥarām*

Verse 172 forbids eating that which is *ḥarām* and along with it, allows eating that which is *ḥalāl* in all gratefulness to Allah. The reason is that the act of eating *ḥarām* promotes evil instincts, kills the taste of *'ibādah* and makes the prayers ineffective. In contrast, eating *ḥalāl* generates inner light, creates a distaste for evil deeds, leads towards high morals, and creates a state in which the heart welcomes *'ibādah* and finds the very thought of sin sickening and of course, prayers are answered. Therefore, Allah Almighty has told all his prophets to eat from what is good and do what is righteous:

يَاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا

O Messengers, eat of the good things and do the righteous. (23:51)

This shows that eating and using what is *ḥalāl* plays a vital role in doing what is good and virtuous. Similarly, living by the *ḥalāl* helps the chances of a prayer being answered while living by the *ḥarām* kills those chances. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that there are many people, tired and distressed, who stretch their hands in prayer before Allah fervently calling 'O Lord, O Lord, yet *ḥarām* is what they eat, *ḥarām* is what they drink and *haram* is what they wear, how then, under these conditions, could they hope to have their prayers answered?' (The Ṣaḥīḥ, Muslim, and Tirmidhī as quoted by Ibn *Kathīr*)

The word إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ (*innamā harrama*) is a restrictive particle, therefore, the sense of the verse is that Allah Almighty has forbidden only those things which have been mentioned later, other than which, nothing else is forbidden. So, in this verse, it is the word, *innamā*

which points out to the given sense, while in another verse (6:145): قل لَا أَجِدُ فِيمَا أُوحِىَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ the same thing has been stated more clearly. Here, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to proclaim that, in what has been revealed to him, there is nothing *ḥarām* except the few things mentioned later on.

At this stage, we have a problem on our hands. The fact is that the unlawfulness of many things stands proved on the authority of other verses from the Qur'ān, and also from *ahādith*. If so, what would be the meaning of this 'restriction' and how are we to explain the negation of 'there is nothing *ḥarām* except the few things mentioned later on'?

For an answer, we can say that *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* are not being discussed here in the absolute sense. Rather, they are discussed here with reference to those particular animals only which the polytheists of Makkah took as *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* on the basis of their pagan beliefs. This has been pointed out in the previous verse where it is said that the polytheists of Makkah were used to declaring some *ḥalāl* animals as *ḥarām* for them and this practice was censured there. Now, it is in contrast to that situation that they are being told here as to how they do not stay away from certain animals which have been declared *ḥarām* for them, while, at the same time, they stay away from those that are *ḥalāl* in the sight of Allah. Therefore, the presence of the 'restriction' here should not be taken in the absolute sense as it is relative, specially in opposition to the polytheistic beliefs.

Now, the things that have been made unlawful (*ḥarām*) in verse 173 are four in number:

1. Dead animal (*Maitah*)
2. Blood (*Dam*)
3. The flesh of Swine (*Lahm al-khinzīr*)
4. An animal on which the name of anyone other than Allah has been called (*Wa mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh*).

These four things have been further explained in other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and in authentic *aḥadith*. Seen as a correlated whole, the following injunctions emerge from them, and they are being taken up here in some detail:

Injunctions about the dead animal

The dead animal is known in English as 'carrion' or carcass. In Islamic terminology, it means an animal not slaughtered in accordance with the requirements of the Sharī'ah. If it dies its own death without having been slaughtered or is killed by choking or aggressive hitting, it falls under the category of 'dead' and remains *ḥarām*. But, in accordance with another verse of the Holy Qur'ān: أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ : 'Allowed to you is the game of the sea and its eating.' (5:96), slaughtering sea-life is not necessary as a condition; it is permissible even without it. It is on this basis that, in authentic *aḥādīth*, fish and locust have been determined as exceptions to the category of *maitah* (unslaughtered) and thus made *ḥalāl*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: 'Two things dead have been made lawful for us - the fish and the locust; and two forms of blood have been made lawful for us - the liver and the spleen.' (Ibn Kathīr from Aḥmad, Ibn Majah and Darqutni)

So, among animals, the fish and the locust are *ḥalāl* without slaughtering, even if they die their own death or get killed by somebody. However, fish that gets decomposed and starts floating on the surface is *ḥarām*. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Similarly, an animal not within range for the hunter to slaughter can become *ḥalāl* without having been slaughtered if the hunter, after saying *Bismillāh*, inflicts a wound on it by means of a sharp-edged weapon such as an arrow. Merely being wounded is not enough; it is necessary as a condition that it be wounded with some sharp-edged weapon.

Injunctions and Rulings

1. If an animal wounded by a gun shot dies before it could be slaughtered, it would be taken as an animal that dies from a fatal strike with a baton or rock. This has been called مَوْقُوذَةٌ (*mawqūdhah*) in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān(5:3) where it has been classed as *ḥarām*. However, if the animal is slaughtered before it dies, it would become *ḥalāl*.

2. Some *'ulamā'* are of the opinion that the common bullet with a conical nose-top falls under the category of an arrow, but the view of the majority is that this too is not an arrow-like weapon, instead, it bores the flesh and tears it apart by the force of the explosive mixture

inside the bullet, otherwise, the weapon itself has no sharp edge which could inflict a wound on the animal. Therefore, an animal hunted with a bullet of this kind will not be permissible without slaughtering it.

3. In Verse 173, *maitah* or the dead animal has been declared *ḥarām* in an absolute sense, therefore, everything about it is *ḥarām*; eating its flesh, buying it or selling it, all included. The same injunction applies to all impurities (*Anjās*). Their use, buying and selling, even deriving any benefit from them are all *ḥarām*, so much so, that it is impermissible to voluntarily feed even an animal with carrion or anything else impure. However, should this be placed somewhere and be eaten by a dog or cat on its own, that would, then be permissible. What is not permissible is to feed them personally. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubi)

4. In this particular verse the injunction declaring *maitah* or the dead animal as *ḥarām* appears to be general which includes all parts of *maitah*. But, this has been clarified in another verse (6:145) by the words: عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَّطۡعَمُهٗ which tells us that the eatable parts of the dead animal are forbidden. Therefore, the bones of the dead animal and the hair, which are not eatables, are clean and their use is permissible. The Holy Qur'ān in verse (16:80): وَمِنۡ اَصۡوَافِهَا وَ اَوۡبَارِهَا وَاَشۡعَارِهَا اَثَاثًا وَّمَتَاعًا اِلٰى حِيۡنٍ has permitted the use of hair of such animals in an absolute sense. The condition of slaughter is not there (Jaṣṣāṣ). Since the skin or hide of an animal carries impurities such as blood it is forbidden unless tanned. When tanned, it is permissible. Further clarifications can be seen in authentic *aḥādith*. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

5. The fat of the dead animal and everything made with it is forbidden. There is no way they can be used. Even buying and selling them are forbidden.

6. Avoiding the use of soap made from animal fat is good precautionary practice. However, it is not easy to find out for sure that fat from dead animals has been used in a particular product, therefore, some leeway exists. Another reason for its permissibility is that some of the blessed Companions such as, Ibn 'Umar, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and Abū Mūsā al-Ash'ari have ruled that the fat of the dead animal is forbidden as far as eating is concerned, while they have permitted its

use externally, and therefore, they have allowed its buying and selling. (Jaṣṣās)

7. Cheese made from milk contains an ingredient called *infaḥa* in Arabic and 'rennet' in English. It is a mucous membrane lining taken out from the stomachs of suckling lambs or kids. It is used to coagulate or curdle milk. If rennet is taken out of the stomach of an animal slaughtered in the name of Allah, there is no harm in using it. The meat, fat etc. of an Islamically slaughtered animal are permissible. But, in the event they are taken from the stomach of an animal slaughtered un-Islamically, there is difference of views among Muslim jurists. Imāms Abū Hanīfah and Mālik consider it clean while Imāms Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad and Thawrī and others call it unclean and impure. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī)

There is a strong likelihood that rennet from un-Islamically slaughtered animals is used in cheese made in non-Islamic countries, therefore, relying on the consensus of Muslim jurists, one must avoid using it. Under the juristic position taken by Imām Abū Hanīfah and Imām Mālik, leeway exists. Some cheeses made in western countries have pork-fat as one of their ingredients which, hopefully, can be seen on the wrapper or tin. All these are absolutely *ḥarām* and impure.

The blood

The second thing forbidden in the verse is blood. The word, *dam*, (pronounced a, 'sum' in English) meaning 'blood' has been used here in the absolute sense, but, in verse (6:145) of Sūrah al-An'ām, it has been subjected to a qualification, that is: مَّسْفُوحًا (that which flows). Therefore, *fuqahā'* agree that congealed blood such as, the kidney or spleen, are clean and permissible.

1. Since flowing blood is what is forbidden, the blood that remains on the flesh after slaughtering the animal is clean. The Muslim jurists, the blessed Companions and their successors and the *Ummah* in general agree on this. On the same analogy, the blood of mosquitoes, flies and bed bugs is not unclean. But, should this be significant, it has to be washed clean. (Jaṣṣās)

2. As eating or drinking blood is forbidden, its external use is also

46. In bio-chemistry, the enzyme rennin in present is rennet and is a milk-curdling agent.

forbidden. As the buying and selling and seeking any benefit from impurities is forbidden, the buying and selling of blood is forbidden and all income derived from it is also forbidden. This is because *dam* or blood in the words of the Holy Qur'ān has been forbidden in the absolute sense which includes all possible ways in which it can be used.

Blood Transfusion

Actually, human blood is a part of human body. When taken out of the body, it is rated as *najis* or 'impure', which would require that transfusion of blood from one human body to another be regarded as *ḥarām* for two reasons:

a) Since respecting the human body is necessary and this act is contrary to that respect.

b) Blood is heavy impurity (*al-najāsah al-ghalīẓah*) and the use of things impure is not permissible.

But, looking into the conveniences allowed by the Sharī'ah of Islam under conditions of compulsion and in general treatment of diseases, we come to the following conclusions:

To begin with, blood is no doubt a part of the human body but its transfusion into the body of another person requires no surgery. Blood is drawn out by means of a syringe from one human body and transferred to another by the same process. Therefore, it is like milk which forms in the human body and goes on to become the part of another human being. The Sharī'ah of Islam, in view of the need of the human child, has made nothing but milk as his or her initial food, making it obligatory on mothers to feed their children as far as they stay married to their respective husbands. After divorce, mothers cannot be forced to feed their children. To provide sustenance to children is the responsibility of the father; it is he who must arrange to have the child suckled by a wet-nurse, or request the mother to continue feeding the baby against payment. The Holy Qur'ān is very clear on this subject when it says:

فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَاٰتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ

"If they (your divorced wives) suckle (your children) for you, then, pay for their services." (65:6)

In short, milk which is a part of the human body has still been made permissible for children in view of their need. It is even permissible to use it medically for elders as well. It appears in *'Ālamgīriah*:

ولا بأس بأن يسعط الرجل بلبن المرأة ويشربه للدواء (عالمگیری ص ٤)

"There is no harm if female milk is dropped in the nose of a man to cure him of some disease, or even if it is given orally as medicine." (For further details on this subject see Al-Mughni by ibn Qudamah, Kitab al-Sayd, volume 8, page 602.)

If blood is dealt with on the analogy of milk, the analogy would not be too far-fetched, since milk is also an altered form of blood and shares with it the common factor of being a part of the human person. The only difference between them is that milk is clean while blood is not. So, the first reason of unlawfulness, that is, being a part of human body, is no more operative here. What remains is the aspect of its impurity. In this case too, some *fuqahā'* have permitted the use of blood on medical grounds.

Therefore, the correct position is that the transfer of human blood to another body does not seem to be permissible in Sharī'ah under normal conditions, but doing so under compulsive conditions on medical grounds is doubtlessly permissible. Compulsive conditions mean that the patient faces a life or death situation and no life-saving drug turns out to be effective or is just not available and there is a strong likelihood that the patient's life would be saved through the blood transfusion. If these conditions are met, giving of blood will be permissible under the authority of this Qur'ānic text which clearly permits the saving of one's life by eating the flesh of a dead animal, if compelled by necessity. However, in the event that there be no condition of compulsion or other medicines and treatments could work, the problem has been dealt with differently by different jurists; some say that it is permissible while others maintain that it is not. Details are available in books of *fiqh*. Those interested in the subject may wish to see my Urdu treatise entitled, 'The Transplanting of Human Limbs'.

The swine is forbiddan

The third thing forbidden in this verse is the flesh of the swine. It will be noted that it is the 'flesh' of swine which has been mentioned

here as unlawful. Al-Qurtubi explains this by saying that the aim here is not to restrict or particularize 'flesh' as such. In fact, all parts of the swine, the bones, the skin, the hair, the ligaments, are forbidden by the consensus of the Muslim community. The introduction of the word لَحْمَ (*lahm*: flesh) is to point out that the swine is not like other prohibited animals which can be purified by slaughtering, even if eating of them stays prohibited. The reason is that the flesh of the swine does not get purified even if the swine is slaughtered, as it is absolutely impure and unlawful. However, the use of its bristles to sow leather has been permitted in *Hadith*. (Jassas, Qurtubi)

The consecrated animals

The fourth thing forbidden in this verse is an animal dedicated to anyone other than Allah. This takes three known forms:

(1) The slaughtering of an animal to seek the pleasure of anyone other than Allah and calling the name of that 'anyone' while slaughtering it, is unanimously forbidden with the consensus of the Muslim community. This animal is *maitah*: dead. It is not permissible to derive any benefit from any of its parts because this is what the verse مَا أُهِلَّ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللهِ (173) clearly means without any difference of opinion.

(2) The slaughtering of an animal to seek the pleasure of anyone other than Allah, despite the fact that the animal was slaughtered by calling the name of Allah, is also forbidden in the Shari'ah. This is something a large number of ignorant Muslims do when they slaughter goats and sheep, even chicken, to seek the pleasure of elders and leaders, and they do this by calling the name of Allah at the time of slaughter. The *fuqaha'* agree that all such forms are *haram* and the animal slaughtered in this manner is a dead animal, a carcass. However, there is some difference of opinion about the reason. Some commentators and jurists maintain that this second situation is also what the verse مَا أُهِلَّ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللهِ (173) means to cover. It appears in the *Hawashi* of al-Baydawi:

فكل مانودى عليه بغير اسم الله فهو حرام وان ذبح باسم الله تعالى حيث
اجمع العلماء لو ان مسلما ذبح ذبيحة وقصد بذبحه التقرب الى غيرالله
صار مرتدا وذبيحته ذبيحة مرتد

> Every animal on which a name other than that of Allah was called is *ḥarām*, even though it was slaughtered in the name of Allah. Therefore, *'ulamā'* agree that a Muslim, who slaughters an animal and intends to seek the pleasure of anyone other than Allah through it, will become an apostate, and the animal he slaughters will be taken as one slaughtered by an apostate.

In addition to this, it is said in Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, *Kitāb al-dhabā'iḥ:*

> ذبح لقدوم الامير و نحوه كواحد من العظماء يحرم لانه اهل به لغيرالله ولو ذكراسم الله
>
> Slaughtering an animal to celebrate the visit of a dignitary is *ḥarām* because that comes under *mā uhilla bihi lighayrillāh* even though the name of Allah has been mentioned at the time of slaughter. (Volume 5, page 214)

Al-Shāmī concurs with this view.

There are others who have not gone to the extent of declaring that this situation is what *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* means clearly since it would be a little burdened Arabic-wise to import the phrase for this situation, but it is on the basis of the commonality of cause, that is, because of the intention of seeking the pleasure of anyone other than Allah, that they have tied this too with *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* and have declared it to be *ḥarām*. In the view of this humble writer, this view is the most sound, cautious and safe.

Nevertheless, there is a regular verse of the Holy Qur'ān which supports the unlawfulness of this situation, that is, وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ. The word, *nuṣub* here means everything worshipped falsely. So, it signifies animals that have been slaughtered for false gods. Since, *wa mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* has been mentioned earlier, it tells us that *mā uhilla* clearly means the animal on which a name other than that of Allah has been recited at the time of its slaughter, and that *dhubiha 'ala n'nusub* appears in contrast to it where the reciting of a name other than that of Allah has not been mentioned. It simply means the act of slaughtering with the intention of pleasing idols. Included here are animals which have been, in fact, slaughtered to seek the pleasure of somebody other than Allah even though the name of Allah has been

recited at the time of slaughtering them. (This special note is from my teacher, Ḥakim al-ummah Maulānā Ashraf Ali Thānavī.)

Imam Al-Qurtubi has taken the same approach in his Tafsir where he has said:

وجرت عادة العرب بالصياح باسم المقصود بالذبيحة وغلب ذلك فى استعمالهم حتى عبر به عن النية التى هى علة التحريم

It was a customary practice of the Arabs that, at the time they were to slaughter, they would call aloud the name of the entity the slaughter was intended for. That was so much in vogue among them, that in this verse, their intention, that is, their seeking of the pleasure of one other than Allah, which is the real cause of forbiddance, was identified as *ihlal* or call. (Tafsir al-Qurṭubī, volume 2, page 307. Imam Al-Qurṭubī has based his findings on the *fatawa* or religious rulings of Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sayyidah 'A'ishah, may Allah be pleased with them both)

During the days of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه , Ghalib, the father of poet *Farazdaq* had slaughtered a camel and there is no report to confirm that the name of someone other than Allah was mentioned on it at the time of its slaughter. But, Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه decided that this too fell under the category of *ma uhilla bihi lighayrillah* and was *ḥaram*. The Companions, may Allah bless them all, accepted the verdict.

Similarly, Al-Qurṭubī reports a lengthy *ḥadīth* from Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā, the teacher of Imām Muslim. Towards the end, it says that a certain woman asked her: 'O *umm al-mu'minin*, some of our foster relatives are non-Arabs and they have one or the other festival going for them all the time. On these festivals, they send us gifts. Should we eat them or should we not?' Thereupon, Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said:

اما ما ذبح لذلك اليوم فلا تاكلوا ولكن كلوا من اشجارهم

Do not eat what has been slaughtered for that day, but you can eat (fruits) from their trees. (Qurṭubī, volume 2, page 207)

To sum up, it can be said that the second situation in which the intention is to seek the favour of an entity other than Allah even though Allah's name is called at the time of slaughtering the animal

comes under the purview of the prohibition relating to *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* for two reasons:

a. The commonness of cause, that is, because of the intention to seek the favour of an entity other than Allah.

b. It is also covered by the verse (5:3), and therefore, this too is forbidden.

3. There is a third situation also where an animal is released after cutting off its ear lobe or branding it in some other manner and this is done to seek the pleasure of an entity other than Allah and to make it an object of reverence paid to the same entity. The animal in this case was neither used in its normal functions nor intended to be slaughtered. Rather, slaughtering such an animal used to be held as unlawful. Such animals are not covered under the prohibition envisaged in verse 173 (*Mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh*) or in verse 5:3 (*Ma dhubiha 'ala n'nusub*), instead, animals of this kind are known as *bahirah* or *sa'ibah* and according to the injunction of the Qur'an the practice of releasing them in that manner is *haram* as it would appear later under the verse: مَاجَعَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَحِيْرَةٍ وَّلَا سَائِبَةٍ

However, it should be borne in mind that their practice of releasing an animal in this unlawful manner or their false beliefs about it do not render the animal itself unlawful. Rather, if such animals are held to be forbidden, it will amount to supporting their false beliefs. Therefore, this animal is lawful like any other animal.

But, in accordance with the principles of Muslim law, this animal does not go out of the ownership of its owner. It continues to be owned by him, even though, he thinks that it is no more his property and has been dedicated to someone other than Allah. This belief of the owner of the animal is false and, in accordance with the dictate of the Shari'ah, the animal continues to be in his ownership.

Now, if this person sells this animal or gives it as gift to someone, then, this animal will be lawful for the assignee. This is what people in some countries do when they endow goats or cows in the name of their idols or gods and leave them with the management of the temples to do what they like with them. Some of them sell these animals to Muslims as well. Similarly, some ignorant Muslims also do things like

that at shrines or graveyards. There they would leave a goat or a full-grown male domestic foul in the hands of the keepers who sell these out. So, those who buy such livestock or poultry from the keepers authorized by owners, for them, it is perfectly lawful if they buy, slaughter, eat or sell them onwards.

Nadhr lighayrillāh: Offering for any one other than Allah

Here we have a fourth situation on our hands which does not relate to animals but to things other than these. For instance, food or sweets offered against vows in the name of someone other than Allah by Hindus in their temples and by ignorant Muslims in shrines. This kind of *nadhr* or *mannat* in the name of someone other than Allah has also been declared *haram* because of the commonness of cause, that is, because of the intention to seek the favour of one other than Allah and which comes under the same prohibition as contemplated in *mā uhilla bihī lighayrillāh* as a result of which its eating, feeding, buying and selling all become *haram*. Details can be seen in the books of *fiqh* such as Al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq and others. This injunction is based on the analogy of the animals mentioned expressly in the text of the Holy Qur'ān.

Injunctions in situations of compulsion

In the verse under comment, after four things have been declared unlawful, the fifth injunction comes as an exception. The text says:

فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَلَآ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

which means that the injunction has been relaxed for a person who is extremely compelled by hunger, and is not looking towards enjoying his food, nor is likely to go beyond the level of his need, then he, in that situation, will not incur any sin if he eats what is unlawful. There is no doubt about it that Allah Almighty is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. It will be observed that the burden of sin which accrues from eating the unlawful has been removed from the *muḍṭar* : مُضْطَرٌّ : the one who is compelled by necessity and must save his life, if he fulfils two attending conditions. In the terminology of the *Shar'iah*, the word, *muḍṭar* is applied to a person whose life is in danger. Ordinary pain or need cannot qualify a person to be known as *muḍṭar*. So, for a person whose hunger has driven him to a point beyond which he must either eat or die, there is an option; he can eat things made unlawful

on two conditions. Firstly, the aim should be to save life and not to enjoy eating. Secondly, he must eat only as much as would serve to save his life; eating to fill up one's stomach or eating much more than one needs remain prohibited even at that time.

Special Note

Here, the eating of things forbidden even under a situation of compulsion (*idṭirār*) has not been made lawful as such by the noble Qur'ān, instead, the expression used is لَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ (there is no sin on him) which means that these things continue to be *ḥarām* as they are, but the sin of using what is *ḥarām* has been forgiven because the eater has done so under the compulsion of necessity. There is a world of difference between making something lawful and the forgiving of sin. If the objective was to make these things lawful under compulsive need, a simple exception from the injunction of unlawfulness would have been enough. But, here the text does not rest at the simple exception, it rather elects to add the statement : لَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ. By doing so, it makes a point, that is, what is *ḥarām* remains *ḥarām* as it is, and using it is nothing but sin, however, the *muḍṭar* (مُضْطَرّ), the compelled one, has been forgiven this sin.

Using the forbidden as a cure, in necessity

A person whose life is in danger can use what is forbidden as medicine to save his life. This too is proved by the verse under comment, but there seem to be some conditions as well which have been hinted there.

To begin with, there should be a state of compulsion, and a danger of losing life. This injunction does not cover ordinary pain or sickness. Then, there is the situation when no treatment or medicine works, or is just not available - the unlawful thing to be used as life-saving drug is the only option open. This is like the exception made in a state of extreme hunger which is valid only when something lawful is not available or affordable. The third condition is that it should be made certain that by using the unlawful, life will be saved. This is like the eating of a couple of morsels from unlawful meat by one compelled fatally by hunger should be enough to save his life. If there is a medicine which appears to be useful but there is no certainty that it would cure the

ailing patient, then, the use of this unlawful medicine will not fall under the purview of the exception made in this verse and therefore, it will not be permissible. Along with these three, there are two additional conditions which have been set forth in the verse, that is, one should not aim to enjoy it and use no more than one needs to use.

Given the restrictions and conditions that emerge from clear statements and subtle hints in the verse, every unlawful and impure medicine can be used internally or externally. It is permissible by the consensus of the jurists of the Muslim *ummah*. In a nutshell, these five conditions are as follows:

1. There be a state of extreme necessity, that is, one's life be in danger.
2. Another lawful medicine does not work, or is not available.
3. It should be normally certain that the disease will be cured by such medicine.
4. Enjoying the use of the medicine should not be the aim.
5. It should not be used any more than it is needed.

Using the forbidden as a cure without necessity

As far as situations of extreme necessity are concerned, the relevant injunction has been given in the text of the Holy Qur'ān and there is total agreement on that. But, about the question of using impure or *ḥarām* medicine even in common diseases, the jurists differ. Most of them say that, barring compulsion, and all those conditions mentioned above, it is not permissible to use *ḥarām* medicine, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ as reported in al-Bukhārī has said that Allah Almighty has placed no cure for the Muslims in *ḥarām*.

Some other jurists have used a particular episode reported in *Ḥadīth* to declare it as permissible. That episode relates to people of the *'Uraynah* tribe and has been reported in all books of *Ḥadīth* where it is said that some villagers came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They suffered from several diseases. He permitted them the use of camel milk, and urine, which cured them.

But, this episode has several possibilities which make the use of prohibited things doubtful. Therefore, the correct original position is:

Unless the conditions of extreme necessity exist in common diseases, the use of *ḥarām* medicine is not permissible.

However, later-day jurists, keeping in view the influx of unlawful and impure medicines in modern times, the general climate of suffering, and the weakness of people against it, have permitted the use of prohibited medicine on the condition that another lawful and pure medicine is not effective, or is not available. It is mentioned in Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, the well-known book of *Fiqh*:

اختلف فی التداوی بالمحرم و ظاهر المذهب المنع کما فی رضاع البحر ولکن نقل المصنف ثم وههنا عن الحاوی قیل یرخص اذا علم فیه الشفاء ولم یعلم دواء آخر کما رخص فی الخمر للعطشان

(علیه الفتوی، ومثله فی العالمگیریة ص ۳۵۵ ج ۵.)

There is difference of opinion in medication through the unlawful. Apparent religious ruling forbids it, as is mentioned in Al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq, Kitāb al-Riḍā' but the author has, at that point in *al-Riḍā'*, as well as here, reported from al-Ḥāwī al-Qudsī that some *'ulamā'* have permitted the use of the prohibited on medical grounds, if the cure is certain and there is no alternate available, which is like the permission granted to the critically thirsty to take a sip of liquor.

The conclusion

The details given above help us find out what we should do about modern medicines that originate mostly from Europe and America, specially those in which the use of alcohol as base or solvent, or the introduction of other impure ingredients, is known and certain. As for medicines in which the presence of unlawful and impure ingredients cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty, their use would have a little more technical leeway, however, there is nothing like precaution, specially when the need is not that pressing. Allah Almighty knows best.

Verses 174 - 176

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۙ أُولٰٓئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ O

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَٰلَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَآ
أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ O ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ
الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَٰبِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ O

Verily, those who conceal what Allah has revealed of the Book and get out of it a small price, they eat nothing into their bellies but fire, and Allah will not speak to them on Doomsday nor will He purify them. And for them there is painful punishment - they are those who have bought the wrong way at the price of the right path, and punishment at the price of pardon. What an endurance on their part against the fire! All that is because Allah revealed the Book with the truth, and those who have disagreed about the Book are far out in schism. (Verses 174 - 176)

Mentioned in the earlier verses were unlawful things which are tangible. Now, the verses that follow take up the intangible deeds that have been made unlawful. These are evil deeds, inner and outer. For instance, religious scholars among the Jews were addicted to giving out false verdicts in favour of people who bribed them. They would go to the limit of distorting the verses of the Torah to suit the desire of their client. In this, there is a veiled warning given to the '*ulama*', the religious scholars of the community of the Last of the prophets, that they should keep away from such practices and never fall short in disclosing the true injunctions of Allah for any material reason or vested interest of their own.

Earning money against the Faith

There is no doubt that people who conceal the contents of the Book of Allah and, in return for this breach of trust, collect insignificant worldly gains are simply eating fire. When comes the *Qiyamah* (Doomsday), Allah Almighty will not speak to them affectionately, nor will He purify them by forgiving their sins. Their punishment will be terrible for they are the kind of people who, during their mortal life, chose to abandon guidance and adopt error, and in the Hereafter, they missed forgiveness and became deserving of punishment. They must be very courageous in that they are all set to go into Hell. All these punishments to them are because they elected to stray away from the Book of Allah, something so clear and true. It is evident that they

must be victims of serious intransigence and are far out in schism, as a result of which they can expect to deserve a matching punishment.

Verse 175 tells us that a person who changes the injunction of Sharīʿah in his greed for worldly gains, he should know that these worldly gains he consumes are like embers of fire he is storing in his stomach because that is the ultimate end of his deeds. Some perceptive ʿ*Ulamā*' have said that unlawful wealth is, in reality, the very fire of Hell, even though we do not sense it as such during our lifetime in the mortal world, but once one dies, his or her deeds will appear in the form of fire.

Verse 177

لَيۡسَ الۡبِرَّ اَنۡ تُوَلُّوۡا وُجُوۡهَكُمۡ قِبَلَ الۡمَشۡرِقِ وَالۡمَغۡرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الۡبِرَّ
مَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَالۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالۡكِتٰبِ وَالنَّبِيّٖنَ ۚ وَاٰتَى
الۡمَالَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ ذَوِى الۡقُرۡبٰى وَالۡيَتٰمٰى وَالۡمَسٰكِيۡنَ وَابۡنَ
السَّبِيۡلِ ۙ وَالسَّآئِلِيۡنَ وَفِى الرِّقَابِ ۚ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ
وَالۡمُوۡفُوۡنَ بِعَهۡدِهِمۡ اِذَا عٰهَدُوۡا ۚ وَالصّٰبِرِيۡنَ فِى الۡبَاۡسَآءِ
وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَحِيۡنَ الۡبَاۡسِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ صَدَقُوۡا ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الۡمُتَّقُوۡنَ O

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteousness is that one believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and gives wealth, despite its love[47], to relatives, and to orphans, the helpless, the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and (spends) in (freeing) slaves and observes the prayers and pays the *Zakāh*; and those who fulfil their promise when they promise and, of course, the patient[48] in hardships and sufferings and when in battle! Those are the ones who are true and those are the God-fearing. (Verse 177)

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47. Or, 'out of His love'.

48. Reflects the emphasis the Holy Qur'ān has given to *al-ṣābirīn* by changing the case from nominative to objective.

From the beginning to this point, the Sūrah al-Baqarah is reaching its half-way mark. Until now, the message was addressed mostly to its deniers since the truth of the Holy Qur'ān was the first thing to be established. In that context, mention was made of those who accepted it and those who rejected it, which was followed by providing proof of Allah's Oneness and the Prophethood. Then, recounted were Allah's blessings and favours on the progeny of Ibrāhim عليه السلام right through the verse وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ رَبُّهُۥ (2:124). Thenceforth started the issue of the Qiblah which continued until it was resolved when the status of *Safā* and *Marwah* was identified as a sign from Allah (Verse 158).

Then, the affirmation of Allah's Oneness was rightfully followed by a refutation of the principles and subsidiaries of *Shirk*, the act of associating others with Allah. The approach this far is full of warning mostly given to the deniers of the message of the Qur'ān; any reference to Muslims was only as a corollary.

The verses that follow contain nearly the other half of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the primary purpose is to educate Muslims in the principles and the subsidiaries of their religion and any address to non-Muslims is by implication only. This subject which continues through the end of the Sūrah has been unfolded by presenting and explaining the cardinal concept of *birr*, an umbrella word in Arabic used for what is good in the absolute sense and which combines in itself all acts of righteousness and obedience, inward or outward. So, when the verse begins, basic principles such as belief in the Book, spending of wealth in charity, fulfillment of promises and patience in distress have been stressed upon which, incidentally, include the basic principles behind all injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān. The fact is that the articles of belief, the deeds in accordance with them and the morals are the essence of all religious injunctions while all details fall under these basics. Thus, the verse actually houses all these three major departments.

The chapters of '*Birr*' (the virtures)

From this point onwards, the reader will find details of this comprehensive attribute of birr, the essence of which is 'obedience'. Many injunctions, in unison with suitable time and place, have been taken up as needed. Some of these are about Equal Retaliation, Will,

Fasting, *Jihād*, *Ḥajj*, Spending, Menstruation, *'Īlā'*, Oath, Divorce, Marriage, Post-divorce waiting period for women (*'Iddah*), Dower (*Mahr*), while *Jihād* and *Infāq* (spending) in the way of Allah find re-stress, and some aspects of buying and selling and witnessing appear proportionate to their need. The finale is good tidings and the promise of mercy and forgiveness.

Commentary

When *Baytullah*, the House of Allah at Makkah was made the Qiblah of the Muslims in place of *Baytul-Maqdis*, the Jews and Christians and the *Mushrikīn*, who were much too eager to find fault with Islam and Muslims, were stirred and they started coming up with all sorts of objections against Islam and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, detailed answers to which have been given in verses that have appeared earlier.

In the present verse, this debated issue has been closed in a unique manner when it was said that Faith cannot be restricted to the single aspect of turning to the West or the East when praying. These are directions in an absolute sense and thus cannot be turned into the very object of Faith to the total exclusion of other injunctions of the Shari'ah.

It is also possible that this is addressed to Jews, Christians and Muslims at the same time, the sense being that real *birr* (righteousness) and *thawāb* (merit) lies in obedience to Allah Almighty. The direction in which He wants us to turn automatically becomes merit-worthy and correct. In itself, the East or the West, or any other direction or orientation, has no importance or merit. Instead, the real merit comes out of one's obedience to the injunctions of Allah, no matter what the direction be. Upto the time the command was to turn towards the *Baytul-Maqdis*, the obedience to that command was an act deserving of merit, and now, when the command to turn towards the House of Allah at Makkah has come, obeying this command has become deserving of merit.

As stated earlier during the discussion of linkage of verses, a new sequence begins from this verse where the main body of the text comprises of teachings and instructions for Muslims with answers to

antagonists appearing there by implication. This is why this particular verse has been identified as very comprehensive in presenting Islamic injunctions. What follows through the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah is an explanation or elaboration of this verse. Given below is a detailed account of what the verse presents as a gist of the articles of faith, the modes of Allah's worship, dealings with people, and the moral principles.

Foremost are the articles of faith. These were covered under مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ: "That one believes in Allah." Then comes the act of following the articles of faith in one's deeds, that is, in Allah's worship and in dealings with people. Allah's worship is mentioned upto the end of واٰتی الزّکٰوۃ : "And pays the *Zakāh*", then, dealings with people were covered under وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ : "And those who fulfil their promise", concluding with the mention of morals under وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ :" The patient." The final statement is that those who follow all these injunctions are true Muslims and they are the ones who can be called God-fearing.

While mentioning these injunctions, the verse has given a number of subtle but eloquent indications, for instance, the spending of wealth has been tied up with عَلٰی حُبِّهٖ : *'alā ḥubbihī* which has three possible meanings. Firstly, the pronoun in '*ḥubbihī*' may refer to Allah Almighty, in which case, it would mean that in spending wealth one should not be guided by material motives or the desire to show off. Such spending should rather be done out of love for Allah Almighty, whose exalted majesty requires that this be done with perfectly un-alloyed sincerity (in the sense of the genuine *ikhlas* of Arabic and not in the sense of some modern casual nicety).

The second possibility is that this pronoun refers to wealth, in which case, it would mean that, while spending in the way of Allah, only that part of one's wealth and possessions which one loves will be deserving of merit. Giving out throw-aways in the name of charity is no charity, barring the option of giving it to somebody who can use it, which is better than simply throwing things away.

The third possibility is that the pronoun refers to the infinitive آتی : *ātā* which emerges from the word إيتاء :*'ītā'* of the text, in which case, the meaning could be that one should be fully satisfied in the heart with what one spends, not that hands spend and the heart aches.

Imām Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has suggested the likelihood that all three meanings may be inclusive in the statement. It may be noted that, at this place, two forms of spending have been stated earlier which are other than *Ẓakāh*. *Ẓakāh* has been taken up after these two. Perhaps, the reason for this earlier mention could be the general negligence practiced in the liquidation of these rights on the assumption that the payment of *Ẓakāh* is sufficient.

This proves that financial obligations do not end at the simple payment of *Ẓakāh*. There are occasions, other than those of paying *Ẓakāh*, where spending out of one's wealth becomes obligatory and necessary (Jaṣṣāṣ and Qurṭubī). For instance, spending on your kin, when they have a valid excuse of not being able to earn their own living, is necessary; or there may be some needy person dying in poverty while you have already paid your *Ẓakāh*, then, it becomes obligatory for you to save his life by spending your wealth on the spot.

Similarly, building mosques and schools for religious education are all included in financial obligations. The difference is that *Ẓakāh* has a special law of its own and it is obligatory to take full care in paying the *Ẓakāh* in accordance with that law, under all conditions. While these other obligations depend on necessity and need; where needed, spending would become obligatory and where not needed, it will not be obligatory.

Special Note

A careful look at the text of the verse will show that those on whom wealth has to be spent, that is, the relatives, orphans, the needy, the wayfarer and those who ask, have all been described in one distinct manner, while the last head on the list has been introduced in another manner. It is clear that by adding فِي : *fī* in : وَفِي الرِّقَابِ "And (spends) in (freeing) slaves" the purpose is to point out that the amount spent will not reach the hands of the slaves owned by somebody as their personal amount which they can spend at will. Instead, the amount has to be spent in buying slaves from their masters and setting them free. Hence, the translation: 'And (spends) in (freeing) slaves.' After that, the statement, أَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتَى الزَّكٰوةَ : "And observes the prayers and pays the *Ẓakāh*" appears in the same manner as everything else has been mentioned earlier. Now, in order to introduce the chapter of dealings,

the style has been changed. And instead of using verbs, the nouns have been used. This denotes that one should have a continuing habit of fulfilling promises made. A chance fulfillment of a compact, something even a disbeliever or a sinner would accomplish once in a while is not enough to qualify a person for being included in the list.

The reason why the keeping of promises has been chosen to represent dealings with people is simple. A little thought would show that staying by a contract entered into or the fulfilling of a promise made, is the essence of all dealings, such as buying and selling, leasing, renting and partnership.

Similarly, while referring to the moral principles or the inner deeds, only *ṣabr* (patience) is mentioned in the verse, because *sabr* means to control the human self and guard it against evil. Even a little reflection can lead to the conclusion that *ṣabr* is the very essence of all inner deeds; through it, high morals can be achieved and through it, low morals can be eliminated.

Yet another change in style made here concerns the use of the word وَالصَّابِرِيْنَ and not وَالصَّابِرُوْنَ on the pattern of وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ which appeared immediately earlier. Commentators call it نصب على المدح : *naṣb 'ala l'madḥ* which means that the word *madh* (praise) is understood here and the word *al-ṣabirīn* is its object. This means that among the righteous, the *ṣabirīn* (the patient) are worthy of special praise since *sabr* gives one special power to perform righteous deeds.

In short, this verse holds in its fold important principles of all departments of Faith and its eloquent hints tell us the degree of importance of each one of them.

Verses 178 - 179

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِى الْقَتْلٰى ؕ اَلْحُرُّ
بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْاُنْثٰى بِالْاُنْثٰى ؕ فَمَنْ عُفِىَ لَهٗ مِنْ اَخِيْهِ
شَىْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌۢ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَاَدَآءٌ اِلَيْهِ بِاِحْسَانٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ تَخْفِيْفٌ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ؕ فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ○ وَلَكُمْ
فِى الْقِصَاصِ حَيٰوةٌ يّٰاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ○

O those who believe, the *Qiṣāṣ* has been enjoined upon you - freeman for a freeman, slave for a slave and female for a female. If one is then forgiven something by his brother, then there is pursuing as recognized and payment to him in fairness. That is a relief from your Lord, and mercy. So, whoever exceeds the limit after all that, for him there is painful punishment. And vested in the *Qiṣāṣ*, there is life for you O people of wisdom, perhaps you will be God-fearing. (Verses 178 - 179)

From the brief introduction to the nature of righteousness appearing in verses before this, the text now enters into the description of related subsidiary injunctions. Under the first injunction in this connection, the verse prescribes the law of *Qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation), that is, the killer will be killed, irrespective of the status of the parties involved. If the aggrieved party somewhat relents on its own and forgives the *Qiṣāṣ*, but does not forgive the offence totally, it will become necessary for the killer to pay *diyah* (دیۃ) or blood-money as fixed, in a fair manner, and promptly. The claimant too, should pursue the matter in a recognized manner causing no harassment to the defendant. This law of blood-money and pardon is a relief granted by Allah Almighty in His grace, otherwise, there would have been no choice but to face the punishment of death. If, after all that, anyone crosses the limit set by Allah, such as, the filing of a false or doubtful case of murder, or a post-pardon re-opening of a murder case, he will be severely punished. In the end, the verse points out that wise people should have no difficulty in seeing that the law of even retaliation does not take life, instead, it gives life, for such a deterrent law will make people fear the punishment of killing somebody and thus lives will be saved.

There is life in '*Qiṣāṣ*'

Literally, the word, *Qiṣāṣ* means likeness. In usage, it denotes 'even retaliation' or to return like for like. In Islamic juristic terminology, *Qiṣāṣ* means the equal retaliation of an aggression committed against the body of a person. This retaliation is allowed only with a condition that the principle of "like for like" is strictly

observed. This has been explained more clearly later on in verse 194 of this very Sūrah which says:

فَاعْتَدُوْا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْ

So, agress against him in the like manner as he did against you.

And also in the concluding verses of Sūrah al-Naḥl, the same rule has been covered:

وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ

And, if you retaliate, then retaliate just as you have been oppressed against. (16:126)

Therefore, as a term of the Shari'ah, the *Qisas* is a punishment for killing or wounding in which the principle of equality or likeness is taken into full consideration.

Rulings

1. The principle of even retaliation is applied exclusively in cases of culpable homicide when someone has been killed intentionally with a lethal weapon causing injury and blood-loss.

2. In a homicide of this nature, the killer is killed in even retaliation - 'free man for a free man, slave for a slave, and female for a female - and similarly, a man for a woman. The mention of 'free man for a free man' and 'female for a female' in this verse refers to a specific event in the background of which it was revealed.

On the authority of Ibn Abī Hatīm, Ibn Kathīr has reported that, just before the advent of Islam, war broke out between two tribes. Many men and women, free and slaves, belonging to both, were killed. Their case was still undecided when the Islamic period set in and the two tribes entered the fold of Islam. Now that they were Muslims, they started talking about retaliation for those killed on each side. One of the tribes which was more powerful insisted that they would not agree to anything less than that a free man for their slave and a man for their woman be killed from the other side.

It was to refute this barbaric demand on their part that this verse was revealed. By saying 'free man for a free man, slave for a slave and female for a female' it is intended to negate their absurd demand that a free man for a slave and man for a woman should be killed in

retaliation, even though he may not be the killer. The just law that Islam enforced was that the killer is the one who has to be killed in *Qiṣāṣ*. If a woman is the killer why should an innocent man be killed in retaliation? Similarly, if the killer is a slave, there is no sense in retaliating against an innocent free man. This is an injustice which can never be tolerated in Islam.

This verse means nothing but what has been stated earlier, and we repeat, that the one who has killed will be the one to be killed in *Qiṣāṣ*. It is not permissible to kill an innocent man or someone free for a killer, woman or slave. Let us hasten to clarify that the verse does not mean that *Qiṣāṣ* will not be taken from a man who kills a woman or from a free man who kills a slave. In the very beginning of this verse the words الْقِصَاصُ فِى الْقَتْلٰى : "The *Qiṣāṣ* has been enjoined upon you in the case of those murdered" are a clear proof of this universality of application. There are other verses where this aspect has been stated more explicitly, for instance, in اَلنَّفْسُ بِالنَّفْسِ (the person for the person).

3. If, in a case of intentional killing the murderer is given full pardon, for instance, should both of the two surviving sons of the deceased pardon and forego their right of retaliation, the killer is free of any claim against him. In case the pardon is not that full, for instance, as illustrated above, one of the two surviving sons does pardon the killer while the other does not, the result will be that the killer will stand released right there from the retaliatory punishment, but the one who has not pardoned the killer will be entitled to half of the blood-money (*diyah*). In Sharī'ah, this *diyah* amounts to one hundred camels or one thousand dinars or ten thousand *dirhams* or approximately nineteen pounds of silver according to current weights and measures.

4. The way an incomplete pardon makes payment of blood-money necessary, in the same manner, a mutual settlement between parties concerned on a certain amount makes retaliation inapplicable and payment of the agreed amount becomes necessary. This, however, is governed by some conditions which appear in books of *fiqh*.

5. Under the Islamic law, the inheritors of the person killed, whatever their number, will inherit and own the right of retaliation and blood-money in accordance with their share in the inheritance. If

blood-money is taken, it will be distributed among the inheritors in accordance with their share in the inheritance. And should *Qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation) become the choice, the right of *Qiṣāṣ* will also be commonly shared by all. Since *Qiṣāṣ* is indivisible, the pardon given by any one of the inheritors will hold good and the pardon will become inclusive of the right of retaliation held by other inheritors. However, they shall receive the blood-money amount according to their share.

6. It is true that the right of even retaliation is vested in the legal heirs of the persons killed but, in accordance with the consensus of the Muslim community, they do not have the right to settle the score all by themselves, in other words, they cannot kill the killer on their own, instead, they have to seek the help of a Muslim ruler or his deputy to realize their right. The reason is that *Qiṣāṣ* is an intricate issue when it comes to details which are simply out of reach for an average person. Therefore, the legal heirs of the person killed, not knowing the particular circumstances when retaliation does, or does not become necessary, may commit some sort of excess under the heat of their anger. So, by a unanimous agreement of the scholars of the Muslim community, it is necessary that the right of retaliation be secured and made effective through the agency of an Islamic government. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 180 - 182

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةُ
لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ○ فَمَنْ
بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ○ فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُوصٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ
بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ○

It is enjoined upon you, when death probes anyone of you and he leaves some wealth, to bequeath for the parents and the nearest of kin in the approved manner, being an obligation on the God-fearing. Then, whoever changes it after he has heard it, its sin will only be on those who change it. Surely, Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing. But, whoever apprehends slant or sin from a testator and puts things right between them,

then there is no sin on him. Surely, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (Verses 180 - 182)

The Qur'ānic view of making will

Literally, *al-waṣiyyah* means an order to do something, either in the lifetime of the maker of *waṣiyyah* or after his death. But, in commonly accepted usage, it refers to what must be done after death. It can be translated as the will or bequest.

Out of the many meanings the word *khayr* has in Arabic, 'wealth' happens to be one of them, for instance, in the verse وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ (Surely he is passionate in his love for good things) where, according to the unanimous agreement of commentators, '*khayr*' means 'wealth'.

In early Islam, when shares in inheritance were not fixed by the Sharī'ah, the rule was that a dying person could make a will within the one third of inheritance, leaving behind in the name of his parents and relatives in whatever proportion he chose. This much was their right; the rest went to children. This injunction appears here in this verse.

The making of a will made obligatory for one who is leaving behind some wealth has three aspects:

1. No shares except those of children are fixed for any other inheritors in what is being left by the dying person. These are to be determined through the will made by him.
2. Making a will for such relatives is obligatory on the dying person.
3. Making a will for more than one third of the inheritance is not permissible.

Out of these three injunctions, the first one was abrogated by the 'verse of inheritance' as determined by most of the Companions and their immediate successors. Ibn Kathīr has reported from the blessed Companion, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas that this injunction was abrogated by the 'verse of inheritance' which is as follows:

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ
وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ○

For men there is a share in what the parents and the nearest

of kin have left, and for women there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left, be it is small or large - a determined share. (4:7)

In another narration of the *ḥadīth* from him it has been said that the 'verse of inheritance' has abrogated the making of will in the name of those who have a fixed share in the inheritance, while the injunction to make a will in favour of those relatives who do not have a share in the inheritance still holds good. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī)

It should, however, be borne in mind that according to the consensus of the Muslim *Ummah* it is not obligatory on the dying person to necessarily make a will in favour of relatives who have no fixed shares in the inheritance. Therefore, the obligatory character of a *waṣīyyah* in their favour is also abrogated (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī). Now, making a will in favour of such relatives is only a desired (*mustaḥabb*) act, and that, too, is subject to their need.

Now the second injunction regarding the obligation of making a will also stands abrogated in accordance with the consensus of the Muslim *ummah*. It was abrogated by that famous *ḥadīth* (*al-ḥadīth al-mutawātir*: the veracity of which stands ensured through an uninterrupted chain of transmitters from many sides who are unlikely to agree on a lie) which was part of the sermon delivered before some one hundred and fifty thousand Companions on the occasion of his last Hajj when he said:

ان الله اعطى لكل ذى حق حقه فلا وصية لوارث (اخرجه الترمذى وقال حديث حسن صحيح)

Allah has Himself given everyone, who has a right, his right. So, there is no will for any inheritor. (Tirmidhī)

The same *ḥadīth*, as narrated by Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, has the following additional words:

لاوصية لوارث الا ان تجيزه الورثة

There is no will for any inheritor unless all inheritors permit.

The essence of the *ḥadīth* is that Allah Almighty has Himself fixed the shares of the inheritors, therefore, the executor need not make a will anymore, in fact, he does not even have the permission to make a will in favour of an heir; however, should other inheritors allow the enforcement of such a will, it will then be permissible.

Imām Al-Jaṣṣāṣ says that this hadith has been reported from a group of the blessed Companions and the jurists of the Muslim community have accepted it unanimously, therefore, this is an uninterruptedly ensured *ḥadīth* which makes the abrogation of the verse of the Qur'ān permissible.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that the scholars of the Muslim community unanimously agree that an injunction which comes to us through the Holy Prophet ﷺ and we know about it with full certitude, as is the case with *mutawātir* and *mashhūr* reports, it will be at par with the injunction of the Holy Qur'ān and will have to be taken as the command of Allah Almighty. Therefore, the abrogation of some verse of the Holy Qur'ān from a *ḥadīth* of this kind is no case for doubt. Although the *hadith* which invalidates a will in favour of an heir is a solitary report, *(Al-Khabar al-Wāhid)*, however, the fact that this *ḥadīth* comes from the sermon of the last Ḥajj of the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he openly proclaimed this before the largest ever gathering of the blessed Companions, and then their consensus and the consensus of the Muslim community make it clear that this *ḥadīth* is, according to them, absolutely proven, otherwise in the presence of the slightest doubt, they would have never abandoned the verse of the Qur'ān and agreed to this abrogating command through the *ḥadīth*.

The third injunction stills holds good with the unanimous approval of the Muslim *ummah* in which it is not permissible to bequeath more than one-third of what one leaves behind. However, should the inheritors allow the bequest of more than one third, even the whole of what one leaves behind, it shall be permissible.

Rulings

1. As stated earlier, now making a will is not necessary to cover relatives whose shares have been fixed by the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, this is not permissible without the permission of other inheritors. However, relatives who do not hold a legal share in the inheritance can be bequeathed upto one third of the total.

2. In this verse a particular will was mentioned which was to be made by a dying person about what he left behind. This stands abrogated. But, making a will is still necessary, specially for a person who owes to others or holds something in trust. He should make sure

that these are taken care of in his will. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said in a *ḥadīth* that a person who has some rights of other people due against him, then, he should not let three nights pass on him by which he does not have his written will with him.

3. As for the right to make a will covering the one-third of his property, one has the right to make some change in this will or cancel it totally during his life time.

Verses 183 - 184

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ۝ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ۭ فَمَنْ كَانَ
مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ ۭ وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ
يُطِيْقُوْنَهٗ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِيْنٍ ۭ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ
وَاَنْ تَصُوْمُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

O those who believe, the fasts have been enjoined upon you as were enjoined upon those before you so that you be God-fearing. Days (of fasting are) few in number. However, should anyone of you be sick or on a journey, then a number from other days. And those who have the strength, on them there is a ransom: the feeding of a poor person. Then whoever does good voluntarily, that is better for him. And that you fast is better for you, if you know. (Verses 183 - 184)

Commentary

Literally, *Ṣawm* means 'to abstain'. In the terminology of Islamic law, *Ṣawm* means 'to abstain from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse; with the conditions that one abstains continuously from dawn to sunset, and that there is an intention to fast'. Therefore, should one eat or drink anything even a minute before sunset, the fast will not be valid. Similarly, if one abstained from all these things throughout the day but made no intention to fast, there will be no fast here too.

Ṣawm or 'fasting' is an *'ibādah*, an act of worship in Islam, regarded as its pillar and sign. The merits of fasting are too numerous to be taken up at this point.

Past communities and the injunction to fast

The verse makes it obligatory for the Muslims to fast in a specified period, but the command in this respect has been accompanied by the statement that the obligation of fasting is not peculiar to them. The fasting had also been enjoined upon the earlier Ummahs (communities of the past prophets). The reference to the earlier Ummahs in the verse shows the importance of fasting on the one hand, and gives an encouragement to the Muslims on the other. It indicates that although there may be some inconvenience in fasting but the same inconvenience was also faced by the earlier communities. This brings a psychological comfort to the Muslims, because if an inconvenience is faced by a large number of people, it becomes easier to bear. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The words of the Qur'ān, اَلَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ (those before you) have been used in a general sense including all religious communities from Sayyidnā Ādam to the last of the Prophets ﷺ. This tells us that, like *Ṣalāh*, fasting has also been enjoined upon every *Ummah* of every prophet without an exception.

Commentators who interpret مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ (before you) to mean 'the Christians' take it just as an example, not aiming to exclude other communities. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The verse simply says that fasts have been enjoined on Muslims as were enjoined on past communities. From this it does not necessarily follow that the fasts enjoined upon the earlier communities were fully indentical in all respects with the fasts enjoined upon this *Ummah*. There may have been differences in the number and the timings of the fasts etc. and, actually, there has been such a difference. (Rūḥ al Ma'ānī)

By saying لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ (so that you be God-fearing), the text has pointed out to the inherent quality of fasting which contributes significantly to one's ability to become abstaining from the sins and God-fearing. Fasting grows into man a power which helps him control his desires, which is really the foundation of *Taqwā*, the very special term of the Holy Qur'ān which has been tentatively translated as fear of God, abstinence, and the warding of evil.

Fasting When Sick

Verse 184 gives concession in the matter of fasting to a 'sick'

person and to a person 'on journey'. The word 'sick' used here refers to a person who cannot fast without an unbearable hardship or has strong apprehension that his illness will be aggravated. The words "and (Allah) does not want hardship for you"occuring in the following verse (185) have a clear indication to this effect. This position is also accepted by the consensus of the Muslim jurists.

Fasting When In Travel

It will be noticed that while giving concession to a traveller, the Qur'ānic text elects to use the phrase أَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ (or on a journey) rather than the word, *musāfir* or 'traveller'. This is to point out that leaving home and going out is not enough to claim the exemption. The duration of the travel should be somewhat longer since the expression, *'alā safarin* means that one should have 'embarked' on a journey which does not mean going five or ten miles away from home. But, the precise duration of this journey has not been mentioned in the words of the Holy Qur'ān. Guided by the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the subsequent practice of his blessed Companions, the great Imām, Abū Hanīfah and many jurists have fixed this distance to be what can be covered in three days by walking in three daily stages. The later-day jurists have put it as 48 miles.

The other ruling that comes out from the same phrase, *'alā safarin* is that a traveller who leaves his home shall be entitled to having been exempted from fasting only upto the time his travel continues. It is obvious that stopping in between to rest or take care of something does not cut off his onward travel in the absolute sense, unless his stay be for a considerable period of time. This very considerable period of time has been set at fifteen days following a statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Anyone who intends to stay at a given place for fifteen days shall not come under the umbrella of *'alā safarin*, therefore, he shall not be deserving of the leave granted to one on 'a journey'.

Ruling. Right from here comes the ruling that anyone who intends to stay out for fifteen days, not at one place but at different places and towns, he shall continue to remain in the status of a 'traveller' and thereby shall continue to enjoy the concession of being 'on a journey' because he is in the state of *'alā safarin*.

Making *Qaḍā’* of the missed fast

The words of the text, فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ literally translated as 'then, a number from other days' mean that a sick person or a traveller is obligated to fast during other days making the number match the number of days he could not fast. The purpose is to tell people that fasts abandoned because of the compulsion of sickness or journey must be replaced by making *qaḍā’* of them. Rather than using a simple statement to the effect that 'their replacement is on them', the Qur'ānic text has said: فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ which suggests that a sick person or a traveller will have to make *qaḍā’* only when the sick person becomes healthy and the traveller returns home and gets to live on for the number of days he is required to replace the fasts he missed. So, one who dies before this happens, *qaḍā’* of fasts will not remain obligatory on him, nor will he be required to make a will for the payment of ransom (*Fidyah*).

Ruling. In the Qur'anic provision, 'a number from other days', there is no restriction on *qaḍā’* fasts, they could be seriatim or random; the choice is open. Therefore, a person who has missed his fasts for the first ten days of Ramaḍān, could first fast in lieu of his tenth or ninth fast of Ramaḍān and replace the earlier ones missed later on; this brings no harm. Similarly, one can fast with gaps at his convenience which would be quite permissible since the wordings of the Qur'ān in فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ (then, a number from other days) leave the possibility open.

The *Fidyah* or Ransom for a Missed Fast

The verse وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ means that those who have the strength to fast and are not restricted by sickness or travel, but do not wish to do it for some reason, they have the option of paying, in lieu of a fast, ransom in the form of charity. However, along with this leave, it was simply added: 'And that you fast is better for you'.

This injunction was valid in the early days of Islam when the purpose was to familiarize people to fasting. In the verse that follows, that is, فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ (so, those of you who witness the month must fast therein), this injunction was abrogated for normal people. However, according to the consensus of the *Ummah*, it remained

applicable to the people of very old age and to those who suffer from a permanent illness with no hope of recovery (Jassas and Mazhari).

All Imāms of *Hadīth*, such as, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Ṭabarānī and others have reported from the blessed Companion Salma ibn Akwa': 'When the verse وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُطِيْقُوْنَهُ (and on those who have the strength) was revealed, we were given the choice of either fasting or paying *fidyah* for each fast. However, when the other verse, فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ (those of you who witness the month must fast therein), was revealed, this choice was withdrawn and fasting alone became necessary for those who had the strength.

A long *ḥadīth* from the blessed Companion, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad describes three changes that came in *Ṣalāh* during the early period of Islam, as well as, three changes in *Ṣawm*. The three changes brought in the injunctions of fasting are as follows:

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to Madīnah, he used to fast for three days in a month, and on the tenth of Muḥarram. Then the command to observe fasts in the month of Ramaḍān was revealed. Under the verse كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ (the fasts have been enjoined upon you), there was an option either to fast or to pay ransom, with a preference given to fasting. Then, Allah Almighty revealed the other verse, (those of you who witness the month must fast therein), which took away the option given to those who had the strength, and ordained fasting as the only alternative. However, the command remained valid for the very old who could pay ransom for fasts they missed.

After these two changes, there was a third change. In the beginning, the permission to eat, drink and have marital intimacy after *ifṭār* was valid only if one did not sleep after breaking his fast Sleeping was taken to be an indicator of the beginning of the next fast in which, naturally, eating and drinking and marital intimacy are prohibited. Then, Allah Almighty revealed the verse, أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَآئِكُمْ (It is made lawful for you, in the nights of fast, to have sex with your women), which made it permissible to eat, drink and have sex during the night until the break of dawn. The eating of *suḥūr* or *seḥrī* soon after getting up in the early hours of dawn was declared to be the

sunnah. This is corroborated by *aḥādīth* in al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd. (Ibn Kaṭhīr)

The amount of Ransom and other rulings

The ransom of one missed fast is half *ṣā'* of wheat, or its cost. Half *ṣā'* is equivalent to approximately 1.632 kilograms. After finding out the correct market price of wheat, the amount should be given to a poor person which will be the ransom of one missed fast. It should be borne in mind that this amount should not be given as part of wages given to those engaged in the service of a mosque or *madrasah*.

Ruling 1. The amount of ransom for one fast should not be distributed between two recipients. Similarly, it is not correct to give the ransom amount for several fasts to one person on a single date. Although, some scholars permit this, yet, as a matter of precaution, it is better not to give the ransom amount of several fasts to one person on one single date. However, if someone does not observe this precaution, the ransom may be treated as valid. (See Shāmi, Bayān al-Qur'ān, Imdad al-Fatawa)

Ruling 2. Should someone be in a position that he cannot even pay the ransom due, he should simply seek forgiveness from Allah through *istighfār* and have an intention in his heart that he would pay it when he can. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 185

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِیٓ اُنْزِلَ فِيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَ بَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ
الْهُدٰى وَالْفُرْقَانِۚ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ؕ وَمَنْ كَانَ
مَرِيْضًا اَوْعَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ ؕ يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ
وَلَا يُرِيْدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ؗ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰى
مَا هَدٰىكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ○

The month of Ramaḍān is the one in which the Qur'ān was revealed as guidance for mankind and with vivid features of (earlier) guidance and the Criterion (of right and wrong); so those of you who witness the month must fast therein and should anyone be sick, or on a journey, then, a number from other days. Allah wants ease for you and does not want hardship for you.

And all this because you may complete the number and proclaim the *Takbīr* of Allah for having guided you and that you be grateful. (Verse 185)

The merits of the month of Ramaḍān

The present verse is an extension of the previous brief verse and also an assertion of the great merit the month of Ramaḍān holds in its fold. This is an extension because the expression أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ (Days few in number) in Verse 184 is a bit vague and which has been explained out in the present verse by saying that those counted number of days mean the days of the month of Ramaḍān. As far as the merit of this month is concerned, it has been said that Allah Almighty has chosen this month to reveal Scriptures. Consequently, the Holy Qur'ān was revealed in this very month. According to a narration from the blessed Companion Wāthilah ibn Asqā' appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Abrahamic scriptures were revealed on the first of Ramaḍān, the Torah on the sixth, the Evangile on the thirteenth and the Qur'ān on the twenty fourth of Ramaḍān. In another narration from the blessed Companion Sayyidnā Jābir, it appears that Zabūr (the Book of Psalms) was revealed on the twelfth of Ramaḍān and the Evangile on the eighteenth. (Ibn Kaṭhīr)

All previous Books mentioned in the *ḥadīth* cited above were revealed on dates given in their entirety. It is a peculiarity of the Holy Qur'ān that it was sent from the Preserved Tablet down to the Firmament of the Earth in one night of the month of Ramaḍān, all of it. But, it was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ gradually during a period of twenty three years.

The night of Ramadan when the Qur'ān was revealed was the Night of Power as mentioned by the Qur'ān itself when it said: إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَٰهُ فِى لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (We have revealed it in the *Laylatu l'Qadr,* the Night of Power). The *ḥadith* cited above places it on the twenty fourth of Ramaḍān and according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan, the Night of Power falls on the night of twenty fourth which aligns this *ḥadīth* with the statement of the Qur'ān. Should this alignment be unacceptable, the fact remains that the statement of the Qur'ān is above everything else, in which case, whatever night is the Night of Power that shall be regarded to be what the Qur'ān intends.

The next sentence مَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ (those of you who witness the month must fast therein) carries many pointers to injunctions relating to fasting. The word, *shahida* is derived from *shuhūd* which means presence. The word, *al-shahr* means the month. It denotes the month of Ramadan here which has been identified above. The sentence, therefore, means that it is obligatory for one who is 'present' in the month of Ramaḍān that he fasts throughout that month. The general choice of paying ransom for not fasting, mentioned in the previous verse, was concelled by this sentence and fasting is now the only alternative in force.

As for the 'witnessing' of the month or being 'present' in the month of Ramaḍān, it simply means that a person finds the blessed month of Ramaḍān with ability to fast. In other words, he or she should be a Muslim, sane, pubert, resident and well-purified from all impurities including those of menstruation and childbed. Therefore, the persons who lacked the initial ability to fast throughout the month, such as, the disbelievers, the minor, the insane, they are not subject to the obligation of fasting, because the verse obligating the fasts did not intend them. As for those who did have the personal ability but were compelled at some time by a legally acceptable excuse, such as, a woman in menstruation or childbed, or a sick person or one on a journey, these have, in a way, found the month of Ramadan in a state of ability, therefore, the injunction in the verse applies to them. However, because of temporal compulsion, relief from fasting has been granted at that particular time, but *qaḍā'* will be necessary later on.

Rulings

1. The verse tells us that fasts of Ramaḍān become obligatory only on the condition that one finds the month of Ramaḍān in a state of ability to fulfil the obligation. Therefore, anyone who 'finds' the whole of Ramaḍān will come under obligation to fast during the entire month of Ramaḍān. Anyone who 'finds' somewhat less of it, he will fast for the number of days he finds in Ramaḍān. So, should a disbeliever embrace Islam in the middle of Ramaḍān, or a minor becomes pubert, they will have to fast from that point onwards; they will not do *qaḍā'* fasts for the previous days of Ramaḍān. However, the insane person, being a Muslim adult, does have the personal ability to observe fasts;

so, should he regain his sanity during any part of Ramaḍān, he shall become obligated to do *qaḍā'* fasts for the previous days of Ramaḍān. Similarly, should a woman in menstruation or childbed become purified in the middle of Ramaḍān, or a sick person becomes healthy, or a traveller becomes a resident, *qaḍā* fasts for the previous days of Ramaḍān will become obligatory on them.

2. How does one 'find' or 'witness' the month of Ramaḍān? According to Islamic law, it is proved in either of the three ways:

a) One gets to have a sighting of the Ramaḍān moon with his own eyes.

b) The sighting of the moon is proved through some trustworthy witness.

c) In the absence of the two conditions cited above, thirty days of the month of Sha'ban will be completed following which the month of Ramaḍān will set in.

3. If, on the eve of the twenty ninth of Sha'bān, the new moon is not visible on the horizon because of clouds or bad weather conditions, and at the same time, there comes no witness of moon-sighting as admissible under Islamic law, the next day will be known as the 'day of doubt': يَوْمُ الشَّكِّ (*yawm al-shakk*) because the possibility exists that the moon may have really been there on the horizon but could not become visible due to unclear horizon as it is also possible that the moon was just not there on the horizon. On such a day, since 'the presence of the month' or the 'finding of Ramaḍān' or being a 'witness' to it does not apply, therefore, fasting for that day is not obligatory, instead, it is *makrūh* (reprehensible) to fast on that day. It has been forbidden in the *ḥadīth* so that *farḍ* and *nafl*, (the obligatory and the supererogatory) do not get mixed up with each other (Jaṣṣāṣ).

4. In countries where days and nights extend over months, the 'finding of Ramaḍān' does not, obviously, seem to apply. The situation would require that people living there should not fast. As far as *Ṣalāh* is concerned, *al-Huluwani* and *al-Qabali* from among the Hanafī jurists have ruled that such people will be bound to observe *Ṣalāh* in accordance with the timings of their own day and night. For instance, in a country where dawn follows immediately after *maghrib*, there the

Ṣalāh of *'Ishā'* will just not be obligatory. (Shāmi) This makes it necessary that in an area where the day lasts for six months, people would have only five Salahs in six months and, for that matter, they will witness no Ramadan coming there, therefore, fasting will not become obligatory for them. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has, in Imdād al-Fatāwā, taken this very position.

Note:

In the sentence مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُم مَّرِيْضًا اَوْعَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ (should anyone be sick, or on a journey, then, a number from other days), the sick and the travelling have been granted leave that they may not fast at that time. When the sick person regains his health and the traveller returns home, they can make up for the days they missed by doing *qaḍā'* fasts. It will be recalled that this injunction had appeared in the previous verse, but now that the choice of paying *fidyah* (ransom) for not fasting has been cancelled, a doubt could creep up in relation to the concession granted to the sick and the travelling, that it may have been abrogated as well, therefore, the provision was positively repeated.

Verse 186

وَاِذَا سَاَلَكَ عِبَادِىْ عَنِّىْ فَاِنِّىْ قَرِيْبٌ اُجِيْبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ اِذَا
دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِىْ وَلْيُؤْمِنُوْا بِىْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُوْنَ ○

And when My servants ask you about Me, of course, I am near. I respond to the call of one when he prays to Me; so they should respond to Me, and have faith in Me so that they may be on the right path. (Verse 186)

Allah is near His servants

Injunctions and merits concerning fasting and Ramaḍān were mentioned in three previous verses. This strain continues even after the present verse when details of fasting and *I'tikāf* appear in a long verse. In between, this brief verse has been introduced to persuade servants of Allah to obey the commands of Allah by recognizing how He, in His special grace, hears and answers their prayers. There is no doubt about fasting being a difficult obligation despite many concessions and permissions. It is to make the trial bearable that

special grace has been mentioned - 'I am near My servants. When they pray, I answer their prayers and take care of what they need.'

Under these conditions, it is befitting that servants of Allah should bear by hardships that come during the performance of given injunctions. Ibn Kaṭhīr has pointed out to another wisdom behind this sentence appearing in the middle of injunctions of fasting. According to him, this verse gives a hint that a prayer (دعا :*du'ā*) made at the completion of a fast is accepted, therefore, one should be very particular about making prayers at that time. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

للصائم عند فطره دعوة مستجابة

> The prayer made by one who is fasting at the time of his *ifṭār* is accepted.

This is why the blessed Companion, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar would assemble his family members around him at the time of *ifṭār* and would pray.

Ruling

By saying إِنِّي قَرِيبٌ (I am near) in this verse, it has been hinted that prayer should be made slowly and quietly; to raise voice while praying is not desirable. This is confirmed by the background in which this verse was revealed. According to Ibn Kathir, a visitor from a village asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ : "Tell me if our Lord is near us, then, we shall pray in a lowered voice; and if He is far, we shall call Him with raised voices." Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Verse 187

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۖ فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۚ وَلَا

تُبَاشِرُوْهُنَّ وَاَنْتُمْ عٰكِفُوْنَ فِى الْمَسٰجِدِ ۭ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا
تَقْرَبُوْهَا ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ اٰيٰتِهٖ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ ○

It is made lawful for you, in the nights of fast, to have sex with your women. They are a cover for you and you are a cover for them. Allah knew that you were betraying yourselves, so He relented towards you and pardoned you. So now you can have sexual intimacy with them and seek what Allah has destined for you and eat and drink until the white thread of the dawn becomes distinct from the black thread; then complete the fast upto the night, and do not have sexual intimacy with them while you are staying in mosques for *I'tikaf*. These are the limits set by Allah, so do not go near them. Thus Allah manifests His signs to the people that they may be God-fearing. (Verse 187)

Explained here in this verse are the remaining injunctions of fasting including the injunction relating to *I'tikāf*.

Commentary

The opening words of the verse, أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ (*uhilla lakum*: 'It is made lawful for you') tell us that the act made lawful through this verse was unlawful before. According to a narration by the blessed Companion, Barā' ibn 'Āzib appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, in the early days when the fasts of Ramaḍān were made obligatory, the permission to eat, drink and have marital intimacy with wives was subjected to the condition that one does not sleep after breaking of the fast. So, as the practice was, a post-*ifṭār* nap rendered all these conveniences unlawful. Some Companions ran into difficulties due to this restriction. The blessed Companion, Qays ibn Sarma al-Ansārī is reported to have reached home after a hard day's labour. The time of *ifṭār* was near and there was nothing to eat. His wife said that she would go out and somehow get him something to eat. When she returned she found her husband asleep, obviously because he was so tired from his day-long work. Now, when he got up, eating had become unlawful. He went on to fast for the next day in the same condition with the result that by afternoon, he fainted (Ibn Kathīr). Similarly, some Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were

embarrassed getting involved in marital relations with their wives after they had taken a post-*iftār* nap. It was after such happenings that the present verse was revealed in which the first rule was cancelled and permission was given to eat, drink and have marital relations, even if this was after getting up from the post-*iftār* nap. In fact, the permission was extended much further when the eating of *suḥūr* or *ṣehrī* towards the fag end of the night, after getting up from the night's sleep, was declared to be a *sunnah*. This has been clearly stated in *Ḥadīth* narrations. The present verse outlines this very injunction.

The literal meaning of the Qur'ānic word رَفَث (*rafath*) is, no doubt, general and covers everything a husband suggests, says or does in making his wife consent to his desire, but there is a total agreement of the Muslim *Ummah* that, at this place, it means sexual intercourse.

It is important to bear in mind that the order or rule which has been abrogated by this verse, that is, the unlawfulness of eating and drinking after having taken a nap, has not appeared in the text of the Holy Qur'ān anywhere. The noble Companions acted in accordance with this rule as set by the Holy Prophet ﷺ (as narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad). This rule is abrogated by the verse only after giving it the authenticity of a divine command. In other words, the verse first establishes the rule in force as the divine command and then,it was for the sake of convenience that it was abrogated. From here we find out that some rules provenly set by the *Sunnah* can also be abrogated through the Qur'ān. So, in the Islamic law, the decision of the Messenger of Allah has the same authority as the injunction of the Holy Qur'ān.

Eating *Ṣehrī*:

The correct time when fasting begins and all eating and drinking turns unlawful has been fixed through a delicate similitude in the verse حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْاَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْاَسْوَدِ ('until the white thread of the dawn becomes distinct from the black thread'). Here, the darkness of the night has been likened to the black thread and the light of the dawn to the white thread. In order to eliminate the chances of extremism, the qualifier حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ (becomes distinct) was added which means that one should not act like the chronically skeptical to believe

all eating and drinking to be unlawful earlier than the break of dawn, nor should one become so heedless as to go on eating and drinking even after having become certain of the light of dawn. In fact, the certainty of the break of dawn is the line of demarcation between eating and drinking and the intended fast. Before one arrives at this certainty, it is not correct to take eating and drinking as *haram*. Similarly, after the certainty, any indulgence in eating and drinking shall be *ḥarām*, and is a source which may lead to the spoiling of the fast, even if it exceeds the limit for a minute. The latitude and leeway allowed in eating *suḥūr* remains valid only upto the time one is not certain of the break of dawn. Particular incidents of this nature attributed to some blessed Companions have been reported when they continued eating and drinking well past the break of dawn. This was because they were not yet 'certain' of the dawn and refused to listen to those who favoured to stop much earlier.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: 'The *adhān* of Bilāl should not stop you from eating *suḥūr* because he calls the *adhān* well ahead in the night. Therefore, you continue eating and drinking, even after having heard Bilāl's *adhān*, until such time that you hear the *adhān* called by Ibn Umm Maktum because he calls the *adhan* precisely at the break of dawn' (Bukhārī and Muslim).

Because of the partial reporting of this *ḥadīth*, some contemporaries misunderstood its provision when they suggested that there is no harm if eating and drinking is continued for a little while even after the *adhān* of *Fajr* and consequently, made it permissible for a person, who woke up late while the *adhan* of *Fajr* was being called, that he can hasten to eat something. The fact is that the *ḥadīth* quoted above has very clearly said that it was necessary to stop eating or drinking with the *adhān* of Ibn Umm Maktum which was called precisely at the break of dawn. In addition to that, the Holy Qur'ān has itself established the deadline which is the 'certainty' of the break of dawn. Giving people the permission to eat and drink even one minute beyond that is a contravention of the textual imperative of the Holy Qur'ān. As for the narrations reported from the noble Companions and early elders of the community regarding the subject of convenience in *ifṭār* and *suḥūr*, these can be explained, keeping the

text of the Holy Qur'ān in view, by saying that they aim to avoid excessive precautionary self-restriction well before one becomes certain of the break of dawn. Imām Ibn Kathīr has also explained these narrations as based on the factor mentioned above. Otherwise, how could even a common Muslim tolerate an open contravention of the Qur'ānic command? One could not even dream of something like this coming from the blessed Companions, specially so, when the Holy Qur'ān has right here at the end of this verse, emphasised special precaution in this respect. Notice how وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهَا (so, do not go near them) has been added to تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ (These are the limits set by Allah) which explains the point made earlier.

Ruling :

All that has been said here is about people who are at a place from where they could see the break of the dawn with their own eyes and thus become 'certain' of it, moreover, if they have the additional advantage of a clear horizon and the personal ability to recognize the initial light of the dawn, then, it is necessary that they should act directly by looking at the horizon. Where the case is other than this, for example, the horizon is not in open view, or it is not clear, or one does not know how to identify the break of dawn, people determine its time by other signs or calculations. Obviously, for them there will be a time when the certain break of dawn would not be that certain. If it remains doubtful, what should people do then? Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ, in his Ahkam al-Qur'ān, has answered this question by saying that, in a condition such as this, it will be desirable not to go ahead and eat or drink with considered volition, but, should anyone eat or drink something in a state of doubt, well ahead of becoming certain of the break of dawn, he will not be a sinner. However, should it prove later that dawn had set in at that time, keeping a fast as *qaḍā'* will become necessary. For instance, if moon is not sighted on the eve of Ramadan and people do not fast, but the sighting of the new moon on the 29th was proved later on through witnesses, then, in that case, those who did not fast that day under the impression that it was the 30th of Sha'bān did not become sinners thereby, however, the *qaḍā'* of that particular fast will become due on them, a position on which there is a unanimous agreement of the community. Similarly, if someone breaks

his fast close to sunset on a cloudy day and the sun turns out to be still there on the horizon later on, then such a person, for that matter, will not be a sinner but he has to do the necessary *qada'* for the spoiled fast.

The explanation given by Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ makes it clear that one who wakes up late and the usual calls of *adhān* were being made, which necessarily makes it certain that dawn has appeared, then if such a person eats anything knowingly, he will not only be a sinner but also be bound to do *qaḍā'*. If he eats in a state of doubt, the sin will be committed but *qaḍā'* will still be due with the added factor of reprehensibility in a certain degree.

The worship of *I'tikāf*

Literally, *I'tikāf* means to stay at some place in seclusion. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, *I'tikāf* is the act of staying in a mosque under particular conditions. The universality of the word فِى الْمَسٰجِدِ ('in mosques') proves that *I'tikāf* can be performed in every *masjid* (mosque). The juristic condition that *I'tikāf* can be done only in a *masjid* where congregational prayers are regularly held and that *I'tikāf* is not correct in a desolate *masjid* where congregational prayers are not held, is really a derivation from the very sense of a *masjid* since *Ṣalāh* with *jamā'ah* (prayer in congregation) is the main purpose of making a *masjid*, otherwise, individual *Ṣalāh* can be offered in a house, a shop, anywhere.

Ruling

1. That eating, drinking and marital intimacy are all lawful in the night of fasts has been stated earlier in the verse. In the state of *I'tikāf*, the permission to eat and drink in the night remains the same as it is for everybody else, but it is different when it comes to intimacy with women which is not permissible in the state of *I'tikāf*, not even in the night. Therefore, the verse gives the necessary injunction in this connection.

2. The rules of *I'tikāf*, such as, doing *I'tikāf* while fasting and not coming out of the *masjid* without pressing needs recognized by Islamic law, are partly derived from the very word of *I'tikāf* and partly from the sayings and acts of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Observe the limits of Allah

Towards the end of the verse, by saying تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهَا ('These are the limits set by Allah, so do not go near them'), it has been hinted that the forbiddance of eating, drinking and marital intimacy while fasting are the limits set by Allah. One should not even go near them because, if you go near them, you may cross those limits. This is why overindulgence in gargling while fasting is *makrūh* (reprehensible) as it holds the danger of water slipping into the throat; also *makrūh* is the use of some medicine inside the mouth; again, equally *makrūh* is the kissing and hugging of one's wife. Similarly, it is better to stop eating and drinking a couple of minutes ahead of the time allowed for *ṣeḥrī* or *suḥūr* just as a matter of precaution, and also, delaying the *iftar* a couple of minutes. Becoming heedless and ease-prone in these matters is against this command from Allah.

Verse 188

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوْا بِهَآ اِلَى الْحُكَّامِ
لِتَاْكُلُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنْ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْاِثْمِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

And do not eat up each other's property by false means, nor approach the authorities with it to eat up a portion of the property of the people sinfully, while you know (all that). (Verse 188)

Previous verses dealt with injunctions relating to fasting in which the use of lawful things has been forbidden during a fixed period and fixed timings. Now in this verse, the acquisition and use of *ḥarām* or unlawful wealth or property has been forbidden. This has a thematic congruity since the real purpose behind fasting, an act of worship, is nothing but to make man get used to abstaining from what is lawful for him. If he can do that, there is every likelihood that abstaining from what is totally unlawful will become all the more easier for him. There is yet another correspondence here. It is necessary that one must make an effort to break his or her fast with what is *halal*. Anyone who goes through the rigours of fasting throughout the day but ends up breaking his fast in the evening with what is *ḥarām* shall only find his fast unacceptable in the sight of Allah.

Commentary

This verse forbids the acquisition and use of wealth and property by unlawful means. It will be recalled that the acquisition and use of things by lawful means has been stressed upon in Verse 168 of Sūrah al-Baqarah as follows:

يَاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوْا مِمَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ حَلٰلاً طَيِّبًا وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝

O people, eat of what is in the earth, permissible and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; indeed, for you he is an open enemy.

Again, the same command appears in Sūrah al-Nahl:

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلاً طَيِّبًا وَّاشْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ۝

So, eat from what Allah has provided for you, permissible and good, and be grateful for the blessing of Allah, if it is Him you worship. (16:114)

The criterion of good and evil in earning

The whole world agrees that money and materials are needed and that life depends on them. So does it agree that there are favoured and permissible ways of acquiring them and there are undesirable and forbidden ways as well. Virtually the whole world looks down upon theft, robbery, and fraud, but people do not generally have some sound criterion to determine if these means are permissible or impermissible, may be this is just not possible since it relates to the well-being of the peoples of the entire world and affects humanity as such. Therefore, a universal criterion, sound and reasonable, can only come from the Lord-Creator of all the worlds through the medium of revelation. Otherwise, if human beings were themselves given the choice of forging their own criterion, naturally, those who give it a legal framework will think more about their nation, country or community and, as customary, this would be different from what would be thought about other nations and countries. Even if this exercise was done through an international body representing the whole world, that too, as experience shows, cannot satisfy all human beings. As a result, there will be legal injustice ending up in nothing but wars and chaos.

The virtues of the Islamic economic system

The Law of the permissible and the forbidden enforced by the

Sharī'ah of Islam comes clearly through divine revelation, or is derived from it. That law - reasonable, natural and comprehensive - is the only law that can work for every nation, country and community and could be the much wanted guarantee of peace. The reason is that everything of common utility has been left as such under this divine law, specially things to which all human beings claim equal rights, such as, the air, water, vegetation, heat, unowned forests and the produce of uninhabited mountain growth. These are the commonly shared property of all human beings; it is not permissible for anyone to take these over as an owner.

Then there are things which, if shared, would disturb human society, or generate conflict and violence. For these the law of private ownership is promulgated. The law that governs the initial ownership of a land or its produce is different from the law of the transfer of ownership. The law has been so formulated that no human being shall be left deprived of the necessities of life, of course, on condition that he puts in his effort to acquire these. Special attention has been given to the consideration that no man usurps the rights of others, or brings loss to them, and thereby, concentrates capital in the hands of a few individuals. Under the law of the transfer of ownership - whether it is in accordance with the divine injunctions relating to post-death inheritance or takes effect through buying and selling as agreed upon by parties concerned - it was made binding that there should be absolutely no fraud or deception in the transaction and also, there should remain no such ambiguity or insufficiency which might lead to mutual bickering and dispute in the future.

Also taken into consideration is the factor of consent in transactions. It has to be made sure that the consent given by parties concerned is genuine and that such consent has not been extracted under pressure. In Islamic law, all transactions known as void, invalid or sinful have some defect inherent in the deal. At places, it could be plain fraud, at others, a return for some unknown thing or act. On occasions, someone's rights are usurped or self-interest is promoted by bringing loss upon others, or the rights of the general public are illegally disposed off. A very important reason why interest, gambling and their likes have been prohibited is that they are harmful to public

interest. As a result of their evil presence in a society, some individuals get to grow as parasites while the whole community is thrown into poverty. Even if such transactions were to be carried out by a mutual consent of the parties involved, such transactions shall not be permissible because they are nothing but a formalized crime against the whole community. The present verse covers all such impermissible situations and aspects. It is interesting to note that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word أَمْوَالَكُمْ : (*amwālakum*) in وَلَا تَأْكُلُوٓا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ translated as 'and do not eat up each other's property by false means' which basically means 'your property'. This expression has a subtle indication to the fact that those who encroach upon the property of others must think that the other person would also have the same sort of love and concern for his property as the encroacher has for his own. If the defendant was to encroach upon the offender's property unlawfully, he would certainly be hurt.

In addition to this, the verse may be releasing yet another suggestion. When someone encroaches upon the property of someone else, and if everybody else started doing this as common practice, the natural consequence would be that others would encroach upon his property, giving him what he gave to others. Looked at from this angle, encroaching upon someone's property unlawfully is really an invitation to others to come and encroach upon the encroacher's property, equally unlawfully. For a moment, imagine what would happen to a society where the cult of adulteration in articles of daily use becomes a common practice. There will be a dealer, who earns a little more by adulterating butter with cheaper oil or fat, who will then go to a milk shop and the milkman will give him milk adulterated with water. If he needs spices, these will be adulterated. The same experience will be repeated when he goes to buy medicines. So, one person earns more by adulteration while the other person takes that extra earning out of his pocket and the third person does the same to the second and the vicious circle goes on and on ad nauseum. The adulterer feels good about what extra he puts in his coffers but he never looks at the hole under it for he keeps nothing of that extra in reality. Therefore, anyone who snatches the other person's money or property by false means, in fact, opens the door to the unlawful plundering of his money and property.

In relation to this verse, there is yet another point one should bear in mind. The words of this divine injunction are general: 'And do not eat up each other's property by false means'. This includes the usurping of someone's property, and theft, and robbery, through which money or property belonging to someone is taken away by force. Then, there is interest, gambling, bribery and all defective sales and transactions which are also impermissible under the dictates of the Islamic law, even though, there be the certitude of consent given by concerned parties. Again, any money or property acquired through lying or a false oath, or earnings which have been prohibited by Islamic law, even though one has personally sweated out to earn it, are all *ḥarām*, unlawful and false. Though the words of the Qur'ān forbid 'eating' quite clearly, but the drive of the meaning here is not restricted to 'eating' as such, instead, it means 'using' in the absolute sense; it could be by eating, drinking, wearing or by any other mode of use. Metaphorically, all such uses are covered under the expression 'to eat,' for instance, A ate up the property of B, which is only a manner of saying, even though all that may not be what can be 'eaten'.

The Background of Revelation

This verse was revealed in the background of a particular event which relates to a land dispute between two of the noble Companions. The case came up for hearing in the court of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The plaintiff had no witnesses. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the defendant to take an oath in accordance with Islamic legal norm. He was all set to take the oath when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the following verse before him as a matter of good counsel:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ

Surely, those who take a small price out of the covenant of Allah and out of their oaths, for them there is no share in the Hereafter. (3:77)

When the Companion heard this verse which warns those who try to take over someone's property through a false oath, he abandoned his intention to take that oath and surrendered the land to the plaintiff. (Ruh al-Ma'ani)

So, this was the background under which this verse was revealed. To begin with, it forbids the acquiring of someone's property by

unlawful means, then towards the later part, it warns against the filing of false cases, taking of false oaths and the giving or commissioning of false witnesses. Forbidding all these, it has been said:

وَتُدْلُوا بِهَآ اِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَاكُلُوا فَرِيْقًا مِّنْ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْاِثْمِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ

which means: 'Do not take property cases to the authorities, so that through them, you eat up some portion of the property of the people sinfully while you do know that you have no right therein and you are simply putting up a false case.'

The words وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ : (while you know) at the end of the verse tell us that a person, who claims something on the basis of misunderstanding and files a suit in the court to acquire it, will not be covered by this warning. In an event of this nature, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

> انما انا بشر وانتم تختصمون الى و لعل بعضكم ان يكون الحن بحجته من بعض فاقضى له على نحوما اسمع منه فمن قضيت له بشئى من حق اخيه فلا ياخذنه فانما اقطع له قطعة من النار (رواه البخاری و مسلم عن ام سلمة رضی الله عنها)
>
> I am human and you bring your disputes to me. May be one of you is more eloquent with his case than the other and I decide in his favour on the basis of what I hear from him. So, should he get anything from what is the right of his brother, he should not take it because, in that case, I shall be alloting him a plot from Hell. (Bukhārī and Muslim from Umm Salmah رضی الله عنها)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has made it clear in his saying quoted above that a Muslim judge may give a judgement under some misunderstanding in which the legal right of one party is being unlawfully given to the other, then, such a court judgment will not make the thing lawful for him. Also true is the converse, that is, it does not become unlawful for one to whom it is lawful. In short, the judgment of a court does not make the lawful unlawful, or the unlawful lawful. If anyone succeeds in grabbing something belonging to somebody else through a court by means of fraud, false witness or oath, the curse of having done that will weigh heavy on his shoulders and he should, thinking of the ultimate accountability in the Hereafter and appearance in the court of Allah, the All-knowing, the All-Aware, leave it off.

However, according to Imām Abū Hanīfah, if in transactions involving a contract or an annulment where the *Qāḍī* or judge have

authority under Islamic law, the *Qāḍī* gives a judgment, even if it be on the basis of a false oath or witness, that judgment will render the contract or the annulment valid under the Islamic law. The rules of lawful and unlawful will stand imposed on it, although, the curse of lying and engineering false witnesses will hang round his neck.

Ḥalāl brings blessings; *Ḥarām* produces evil:

There are several places in the Holy Qur'ān where the abstention from the unlawful and the acquisition of the lawful has been stressed upon in many different ways. It has also been pointed out in a verse that human deeds and morals are enormously affected by eating what is lawful. If one does not eat and drink *ḥalāl* things, it is almost impossible to expect good moral and righteous deeds coming from that person. It was said in the Holy Qur'ān:

يَاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا اِنِّيْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ

> O messengers, eat of the good things and be righteous in deeds. I am aware of what you do. (23:51)

In this verse, it will be noted that eating of the lawful has been combined with the command to do what is righteous. The hint is that righteous deeds can issue forth only when man eats and drinks what is lawful. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself made it clear in a *ḥadīth* that the address in this verse is, no doubt, to prophets, but this command is not restricted to them alone, instead, all Muslims are charged with it. Towards the end of this *ḥadīth*, he also said that the prayer of a person who eats what is unlawful is not answered. The Holy Prophet ﷺ adds that there are many people who take great pains in their acts of worship, then raise their hands in prayer before Allah Almighty and say, 'O Lord, O Lord' but what they eat is *ḥarām*, what they drink is *ḥarām*, what they wear is *haram*, if so, how can this prayer of theirs be answered?

A great portion of the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been devoted to the great task of saving his *ummah* from the unlawful and calling it to the use of what is lawful. He said:

> 'One who ate *ḥalāl*, followed the *sunnah* and people were not hurt by him, he will go to Paradise.' The blessed Companions said, 'O Messenger of Allah, right now these things are common in your community. Most Muslims observe these

> strictly.' He said:' Yes! In future too, in every age, there will be people who shall abide by these rules.' (This *ḥadīth* has been reported by Tirmidhī and he calls it *sahih*)

In another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar:

> There are four traits, if these are in you and you have nothing else in the world, they shall suffice you. Those four traits are: Guarding a trust, telling the truth, good morals and being particular in eating what is *ḥalāl*.

The blessed Companion Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضى الله عنه requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ to pray for him so that he may become one of those whose prayers are accepted. He said:

> O Sa'd, make what you eat permissible and pure, and you shall become one whose prayers are responded to. And by Him in whose hands rests the life of Muḥammad, when the servant of Allah slips a morsel of what is *ḥarām* into his stomach, no deed of his is accepted for the next forty days. And a person whose flesh is made of unlawful acquisitions, for that flesh the fire of Hell is the only recipient.

The blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> By him in whose hands rests my life, no servant of Allah becomes a Muslim unless his heart and tongue become Muslim and until his neighbours become secure from his distressing deeds. And when a servant acquires the unlawful and then gives it in charity, that is not accepted; and if he spends out of it, it stays deprived of blessings; and if he leaves it behind for his inheritors, it becomes his wherewithal for the trip to Hell. Surely, Allah Almighty does not help an evil wash off another evil, but He does help the washing away of an evil deed with a good deed.

Questions man must answer on the Day of Resurrection

The blessed Companion Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> ما تزال قدما عبد يوم القيامة حتى يسأل عن اربع عن عمره فيما افناه و عن شبابه فيما ابلاه وعن ماله من اين اكتسبه وفيما انفقه وعن علمه ماذا عمل فيه (البيهقى ، ترغيب)

> No servant of Allah shall move a step on Doomsday unless he is made to answer four questions; firstly, about his life, in what did he spend it out; secondly, about his youth, in what did he consume it; thirdly, about his wealth, where from did he earn it and in what did he spend it; and fourthly, about his knowledge, how far did he act in line with it.' (Al-Bayhaqi, Targhib)

The blessed Companion, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once gave a sermon in which he said:

> O Emigrants, I seek the refuge of Allah Almighty against five traits of character lest they should grow into you: firstly, against immodesty, for when immodesty prevails in a people they are hit by plagues, epidemics and ever-new diseases not even heard of by their elders; and secondly, against cheating in weights and measures, for when this disease grips a people, they are hit by famine, price-hikes, rigorous labour and over-work and oppressive rulers; and thirdly, against non-payment of *Ẓakāh*, for when people do not pay *Ẓakāh*, rains are stopped; and fourthly, against the religious apathy of people, for when a community breaks its covenant with Allah and His Messenger, then Allah Almighty makes alien enemies sit over them who snatch away what belongs to them without any justification; and fifthly, against the apathy of ruling authority, for when the rulers of a people fail to decide matters in accordance with the Book of Allah because the injunctions revealed by Allah Almighty do not suit their fancies, then Allah Almighty causes mutual hatred and disputations descend upon them. (This narration has been reported by Ibn Mājah, al-Bayhaqī and others and al-Ḥākim has called it '*Ṣaḥīḥ*' according to the standard set by Muslim.)

May Allah Almighty give us and all Muslims the most perfect ability to stay safe against such unfortunate happenings.

Verses 189-191

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَهِلَّةِ ۭ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيْتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ۭ وَلَيْسَ
الْبِرُّ بِاَنْ تَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقٰى ۚ
وَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ اَبْوَابِهَا ۠ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝
وَقَاتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ

لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ۝ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَخْرِجُوْهُمْ
مِّنْ حَيْثُ اَخْرَجُوْكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ اَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُقٰتِلُوْهُمْ عِنْدَ
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتّٰى يُقٰتِلُوْكُمْ فِيْهِ ۚ فَاِنْ قٰتَلُوْكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ ۭ
كَذٰلِكَ جَزَاۤءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۝

They ask you about the new moons. Say: They are indicative of time for the people, and of the Ḥajj. And it is not righteousness that you come into your houses from their backs but righteousness is that one fears Allah. And come to the houses through their doors. And fear Allah so that you may be successful. And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you and do not transgress. Verily, Allah does not like the transgressors. And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from where they drove you out, and *Fitnah* (to create disorder) is more severe than to kill. And do not fight them near *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* unless they fight you there. However, if they fight you (there) you may kill them. Such is the reward of the disbelievers. (Verses 189 - 191)

The theme of righteousness which started from Verse 177 still continues. The six injunctions that have appeared so far relate to even retaliation, bequest, fasting, *I'tikāf* and abstention from the unlawful. Now come those of *Hajj* and *Jihād* prior to which it was clarified that lunar months and days will be followed in Hajj and in other religious obligations. Also erased here is a custom of *jāhiliyyah* (days of ignorance) which required people in *Iḥrām* to go into their houses, if needed, from the back even if it had to be through a hole in the wall bored for this purpose, as they thought it was prohibited to enter houses from the front door when in *Iḥrām*. They even rated it as 'righteousness'. So, it is immediately after the mention of Ḥajj that Allah Almighty tells them that entering the houses from the backs is no righteousness. Real righteousness lies in abstaining from what has been made unlawful by Allah. Since coming into houses through their doors is not forbidden, the question of abstaining from it does not arise. So, those who wish to go into their houses should enter through their doors, but the center-piece of all principles is that people must

keep fearing Allah so that they can hope to have the best of both the worlds.

Verse 190-191 carry the injunction relating to fighting with disbelievers. It was the month of Dhul-Qa'dah in the year 6 A.H. that the Holy Prophet ﷺ began his journey to the sacred city of Makkah in order to perform *'Umrah*. Makkah was still controlled by the *mushrikin* (the infidels). They did not allow him and his Companions to go into the city and *'Umrah* could not be performed as intended. It took a great deal of negotiating to arrive at the agreement that the Muslims would perform *'Umrah* next year. This pact is known as the 'Peace of *Hudaybiyyah*'; a detailed explanation of the verse in this context will appear later.

Commentary

Reported in the first Verse (189) there is a question asked by the noble Companions and its answer given by Allah Almighty. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās says that the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had a distinct mannerliness of their own. On account of the great respect they had for him, they asked very few questions from their Prophet ﷺ . This is contrary to the practice of the communities of the past prophets who asked many questions and thus failed to observe the etiquette due before a prophet. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās adds that the total number of questions asked by the noble Companions as mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān is fourteen, one of which has just appeared above: اِذَا سَاَلَكَ عِبَادِىْ : 'And when My servants ask you...' (186). The other question is right here. Other than these, there are six more questions appearing in Sūrah al-Baqarah itself. The rest of the six questions come up in various other Surahs.

It is mentioned in the present verse that the noble Companions asked the Messenger of Allah about the new moon as it appears in the early part of the month, having a shape different from the sun. The new moon begins as a thin crescent slowly growing into full circle, then, it starts reducing itself in the same manner. So, they asked either about its cause or about the wisdom underlying its gradual growth. Both possibilities exist. But the answer given states the wisdom and benefit behind it. Now, if the question itself was concerned with the wisdom and benefit behind the waning and waxing of the new moon, then the answer obviously synchronizes with the

question. But, if the question aimed at finding out the cause of the waning and waxing of the new moon, which is far away from the mannerliness of the noble Companions, then the answer, by electing to state its wisdom and benefit rather than its reality, simply hints that finding out the reality of the heavenly bodies is not an area under man's control anyway, and then, for that matter, the knowledge of its reality is not necessary for any practical purpose, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter. Therefore, the question of reality is absurd. What could be asked and what could be explained is that there are certain benefits that accrue to us through the waning and waxing, the setting and the rising of the moon in this manner. Therefore, in response to this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was told that he should tell them that their benefits tied to the moon are that they will find it easy to determine the time factor in their transactions and contracts, and to know about the days of the Ḥajj.

The Lunar Calendar is the Islamic choice

This verse tells us no more than that the moon will help identify the count of months and days on which rest transactions and acts of worship, such as, the Ḥajj. The same subject has been dealt with in Sūrah Yūnus in the following manner:

وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ

> And determined it (the moon) by stations, that you might know the number of the years and the reckoning. (10:5)

This tells us that the benefit of having the moon pass through different stages and conditions is that people may find out through it the count of years, months and days. But, in a verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'il, this count has been connected to the sun as well in the following words:

فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَ
لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ

> Then We erased the sign of the night and brought out the sign of the day to see, so that you seek the blessing from your Lord and get to know the number of years and the reckoning. (17:12)

Although this third verse proves that years and months can be counted with the help of a solar calendar also, yet the words used by

the Holy Qur'ān with regard to the moon very clearly indicate that the lunar calendar is a fixed choice in the Sharī'ah of Islam, specially in prescribed acts of worship which relate to a particular month and its dates; for instance, the months of Ramaḍān and Ḥajj, as well as injunctions related to the days of Ḥajj, Muḥarram and *Lailatul-Qadr* are all tied to the sighting of the new moon, all this because in this verse, by saying هِيَ مَوَاقِيْتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ (They are indicative of time for the people and of the Hajj), it has been established that the lunar calendar is the one to be trusted upon in the sight of Allah, although, the count of months can come out of a solar calendar as well.

The Sharī'ah of Islam has opted for the lunar calendar because it is based on something which every sighted person can see on the horizon and be informed accordingly; the knowledge of it is equally easy for the scholars, the ignorant, the villagers, the islanders and the dwellers of the mountains. This stands in contrast with the solar calendar which depends on meteorological equipment and mathematical computations which cannot become the common personal experience of everybody so easily. Then comes the matter of religious observances, the *'ibādat*, where the lunar calendar has been fixed as an obligation. This has also been favoured in social and business transactions because it serves as a basis for the acts of Islamic worship, and a symbol of Islamic identity, notwithstanding the position of the solar calendar which has not been prohibited juristically, the only condition being that the use of the solar calendar should not become so widespread that people forget all about the lunar calendar. If this happens, it would necessarily affect the obligatory *'ibādat* like Fasting and Ḥajj adversely, a sampling of which is visible in our time, in offices and businesses, government and private, where the solar calendar is being used with such frequency that many people do not seem to even remember all Islamic months by name. Apart from the juristic position of the lunar system, this situation is a deplorable demonstration of our lack of will to approach and uphold such a matter of national and religious identity with a sense of self-respect. It is not difficult to use the solar calendar only in office situations where one has to deal with non-Muslims as well, but for the rest of office correspondence, private dealings and dailv requirements the lunar calendar may be used with

advantage, that is, if this is done, the user will earn the *thawāb* of performing a *farḍ 'alā al-kifāyah* (an obligation which, if performed by some, suffices for others), and of course, national identity will be preserved.

Ruling

From the verse لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِاَنْ تَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا (And it is not righteousness that you come into your houses from their backs) comes the ruling that something which the Sharī'ah of Islam has not classed as 'necessary' (*wājib*) or has not given it the status of an act of *'Ibādah*, should not be taken as 'necessary' or an act of *'Ibādah* on one's own. This is not permissible. Similarly, taking something to be a sin while it is permissible under Islamic law is a sin in itself. This is exactly what those people had done. Entering houses through doors was permissible under religious law, yet they made it out to be a sin, while coming into the house from its back by breaking through the wall was not 'necessary' under the religious law, yet they made it out to be necessary. This was why they were admonished.

The reason why *bid'āt* (innovations in religious matters) are not permissible is that unnecessary things are taken to be necessary like the obligatory - *farḍ*, or *wājib*. Or, things permissible are taken to be forbidden or unlawful. This verse makes it very clear that doing so is prohibited, and incidentally, this gives us the guiding rule in thousands of acts in vogue.

***Jihād*: To fight in the way of Allah**

That *Jihād* and *Qitāl* or fighting against disbelievers was prohibited prior to the emigration to Madīnah is a fact the entire Muslim community agrees upon. All verses revealed during that time advised Muslims to be patient against pains inflicted on them by disbelievers, even to ignore and forgive when they can. It was after the emigration to Madīnah that the first command to fight against them came through this verse (as said by al-Rabī' ibn Anas and others). Another narration from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddīq رضى الله عنه says that the first verse relating to this subject is: اُذِنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ يُقٰتَلُوْنَ بِاَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوْا : "Leave is given to those who are fought against because they were wronged", but according to a majority of the blessed Companions and their successors, the first verse commanding to fight the disbelievers is

this very verse from Sūrah al-Baqarah while the verse which has been identified as the first verse on this subject by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddīq, that too, being among the very initial verses revealed, could be called the first.

The command in this verse is that Muslims should fight only those disbelievers who come to fight against them. It means that there are other people too who do not take part in fighting, such as, the women, the children, the very old, the priests and monks and others devoting themselves to quiet religious pursuits, and the physically handicapped, and those casual labourers who work for disbelievers and do not go to fight along with them; it is not permissible to kill such people in a *Jihād*. The reason is that the command in the verse is restricted to fighting those who come to fight Muslims. The kind of people mentioned above are not all fighters. That is why Muslim Jurists رحمهم الله, have also ruled that should a woman, an old man or religious person take part in actual fighting along with disbelievers or be helping them in any manner in their fight against the Muslims, then, killing them is permissible because they come under the purview of ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمْ :'those who fight you'. (Mazharī, Qurṭubī and Jaṣṣāṣ)

The battle orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ given to the *mujahidīn* of Islam at the time of *Jihād* carry a good explanation of this injunction. In a *hadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as narrated by the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, it is said:

نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن قتل النساء والصبيان

'The Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the killing of women and children.'

The following instructions from the Holy Prophet ﷺ given to the Companions going on *Jihād* have been narrated in a *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Anas which appears in Abū Dāwūd: 'Go for *Jihād* in the name of Allah adhering to the community of the Messenger of Allah. Do not kill anyone old and weak, any young child or any woman.' (Mazharī)

When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddīq sent Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān to Syria, he gave him the same instructions. Also added there is the prohibition of killing the religiously-devoted, the monks and priests, and the labourers employed by disbelievers, specially when they do not take part in fighting (Qurṭubī).

The expression وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا (and do not transgress) towards the end of the verse, according to the majority of the commentators means - 'do not go beyond the limit in fighting as to start killing women and children'.

As already explained briefly in the opening remarks, the verse 191, that is, وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ (And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from where they drove you out...), was revealed after the happening at *Hudaybiyyah* at a time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided, in accordance with the condition agreed upon in the Peace Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*, to embark on a journey to Makkah to perform the *qaḍā'* of *'Umrah* along with his Companions, something he was stopped from doing a year before by the disbelievers of Makkah. The noble Companions, on the eve of this projected journey, had started to worry about the disbelievers who could not be trusted upon in a peace treaty. If they chose to be aggressive, as they did a year before, what option are they going to take? Thereupon, the words used in the present verse gave them the permission to meet the challenge of their aggression and kill them where they find them. And if they could, it was permissible for them to drive the disbelievers out from where they had driven the believers out.

Since Muslims, during their entire Makkan period, were made to stay away from fighting against the disbelievers and were repeatedly asked to forego and forgive, so much so, that the noble Companions were, before the revelation of this verse, under the impression that killing disbelievers was bad, and prohibited. It was to remove this misconception that it was said: وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ :"And *Fitnah* is more severe than to kill," that is, it is true that to kill someone is a terribly evil act, but more terrible and severe is what the disbelievers of Makkah have done by insisting on their *kufr* and *shirk* (infidelity and the associating of others with Allah) and by stopping Muslims from fulfillling their religious obligations, and from performing Hajj and *'Umrah*. It is to avoid this greater evil that killing them has been permitted. The word, *Fitnah* in the verse (not translated for want of a perfect equivalent in English) inescapably means *kufr* and *shirk* and to prevent Muslims from fulfilling their religious obligations of *'ibādah*. (Jaṣṣāṣ, Qurṭubī and others)

Since the generality of the words 'kill them wherever you find them' might lead to the misconception that killing the disbelievers is allowed even in the precincts of *Ḥaram*, this generality has been particularized in the next sentence of the verse by saying:

وَلَا تُقٰتِلُوْهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتّٰى يُقٰتِلُوْكُمْ فِيْهِ

And do not fight them near *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* unless they fight you there.

That is, 'you should not fight them close to *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, which includes all its environs in Makkah, unless they themselves start fighting you there.'

Rulings

1. In the *Ḥaram* (the sacred precincts) of Makkah, it is just not permissible to kill even a bird or animal, let alone the human beings. However, this same verse tells us that in the event someone starts killing somebody else within the sacred precincts, then, that other person is permitted to fight back in defence. There is a consensus of the jurists on this point.

2. It also comes out from this verse that the prohibition of initiating *Jihād* or *Qitāl* is restricted to *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* and its environs to which the sacred precincts extend in Makkah. At other places, just as the defensive *Jihād* is necessary, the initiating of *Jihād* and *Qitāl* is also valid.

Verses 192 - 195

فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝ وَقٰتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ
فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ لِلّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ اِلَّا عَلَى
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝ اَلشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمٰتُ قِصَاصٌ ۭ
فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوْا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدٰى عَلَيْكُمْ ۠
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝ وَاَنْفِقُوْا فِيْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوْا بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ اِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ ۚ وَاَحْسِنُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝

But if they desist, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until there is no *Fitnah* any more, and obedience remains for Allah. But, if they desist, then there is no aggression except against the transgressors. The holy month for the holy month, and the sanctities are subject to retribution. So when anyone aggresses against you, agress against him in the like manner as he did against you. And fear Allah and be sure that Allah is with the God-fearing. And spend in the way of Allah and do not put yourselves into destruction. And do good. Of course, Allah loves those who do good. (Verses 192 - 195)

Commentary

1. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to travel to Makkah in the year 7 A.H. to perform his *qaḍā' 'Umrah* as envisaged in the peace treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*; his Companions who were to accompany him knew that disbelievers could not be trusted with treaties, or peace. It was quite possible that they may start fighting. Now, the blessed Companions had a problem before them. They thought if this fighting came, it would have to be within the sacred precincts of Makkah, which is not permissible in Islam. This doubt was answered in Verse 191 by stating that the sanctity of the sacred precincts of Makkah must certainly be observed by Muslims, but should the disbelievers start to fight within the sacred limits, then, it is permissible for them to fight back in defence.

2. The second problem that bothered the noble Companions was about the month, which was Dhul-Qa'dah, being one of the four known as the 'sacred months' wherein fighting anyone anywhere was not permissibe. Now, the Muslims thought if the disbelievers of Makkah started fighting against them how could Muslims fight a defensive battle during a 'sacred month'? The verse under reference (194) was revealed to answer this doubt. The answer is that, the way a state of defence grants an exception to observing the sanctity of the *Ḥaram* of Makkah, in the same manner, it allows an exception to observing the sanctity of the 'sacred months' also.

Ruling

There are four 'sacred months': Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram which are consecutive and the fourth is Rajab. Even before Islam,

fighting in these months was considered unlawful and the disbelievers of Makkah too used to observe their sanctity. Even in the early days of Islam, right through the year 7 A.H., this law was in force which is why the noble Companions were perplexed. Later, according to the consensus of the *Ummah*, this unlawfulness of fighting was abrogated and the permission to fight was given, but it is still preferable not to initiate fighting in these four months without the need to defend. Therefore, it can be said that the sanctity of the 'sacred months' has not been abrogated totally, but it holds good like the sanctity of *Ḥaram*. Both of them have been subjected to an exception for the the sake of defence.

Spending for *Jihad*

The verse 195 introduces the tenth injunction under the theme of 'righteousness' which began in Verse 177. So, in وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ : (And spend in the way of Allah...), Muslims have been obligated to spend money and materials according to the need of *Jihād* ordered in the way of Allah. From here, jurists have deduced the ruling that Muslims have some other financial obligations as well in addition to the mandatory obligation of *Zakāh*, but these are neither permanent nor bound by a 'threshold' or quantity, instead, it is obligatory on all Muslims to provide everything as and when needed. Of course, should there be no need, nothing remains obligatory. The expenditure on *Jihād* is included under this provision.

The literal meaning of the next sentence in this verse وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ as translated in the text are obvious. The verse forbids Muslims from throwing themselves into destruction by their own choice. However, the question remains: What does the expression, 'put yourselves into destruction', mean here? Commentators have explained it in different ways. The blessed Companion, Abū Ayyub al-Ansārī said: 'This verse was revealed about us. We can explain it best. It was when Allah gave Islam authority and power, we started talking that '*Jihād*' was not necessary any more, and that we could stay home and take care of our wealth and property'. Thereupon, this verse was revealed which made it clear that 'destruction' at this place means 'the abandonment of *Jihad*'. This proves that the banishing of *Jihād* from Muslim lives is the cause of their degradation and

destruction. This is why the blessed Companion Abū Ayyub al-Ansārī spent his entire life in *Jihād*, out of Madīnah, his home, so much so, that he met the end of his life in Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey and was buried there.

The same approach to the meaning of this verse has been reported from the earliest authorities in *Tafsīr*, such as, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥudhayfah, Qatādah, Mujāhid and Ḍaḥḥāk. Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib said that to lose hope in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah is to go for personal destruction voluntarily; therefore, to lose hope in Forgiveness is forbidden. Others say that exceeding the limit while spending in the way of Allah so much so that the rights of the family are compromised thereby, is the act identified as 'putting yourself into destruction'; so, such excess in expenditure is not permissible. Still others think that the verse makes it unlawful to throw oneself into an offensive fighting in a situation when it is already obvious that one will be unable to do anything against the enemy other than dying at their hands.

Notwithstanding the apparently various interpretations of this verse, al-Jaṣṣāṣ synthesizes these by saying that all these rules can be inferred from this verse.

The last sentence of the verse (195): وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ : (And do good. Of course, Allah loves those who do good), gives an incentive to do everything nicely. The Holy Qur'ān calls this *Iḥsān*. Now, doing something nicely, can take two forms. When *iḥsān* relates to '*Ibādah* (worship), its meaning has been explained by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself in the well-known *ḥadīth* of Jibrā'īl where he said that 'you should worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, and if you cannot achieve that degree of perception, then you should, at the least, believe that Allah Almighty is seeing you'.

And when it (*Iḥsān*) relates to social transactions and dealings, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has explained *Iḥsān* by saying (as reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of the noble Companion Mu'ādh) that 'you should like for others what you like for yourselves, and in the same manner, you should dislike for others what you dislike for yourselves' (Maẓharī).

Verses 196 - 203

وَاَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ اُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ
الْهَدْيِ ۚ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوْا رُءُوْسَكُمْ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهٗ ؕ فَمَنْ
كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ بِهٖۤ اَذًى مِّنْ رَّاْسِهٖ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّنْ صِيَامٍ
اَوْ صَدَقَةٍ اَوْ نُسُكٍ ۚ فَاِذَاۤ اَمِنْتُمْ ٚ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ اِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا
اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ فِى الْحَجِّ
وَسَبْعَةٍ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ؕ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ اَهْلُهٗ
حَاضِرِى الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ
الْعِقَابِ ۝ اَلْحَجُّ اَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٌ ۚ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيْهِنَّ الْحَجَّ
فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِى الْحَجِّ ؕ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
يَّعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَتَزَوَّدُوْا فَاِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوٰى ؗ وَاتَّقُوْنِ يٰۤاُولِى
الْاَلْبَابِ ۝ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ
فَاِذَاۤ اَفَضْتُمْ مِّنْ عَرَفٰتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۪ وقف النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم
وَاذْكُرُوْهُ كَمَا هَدٰىكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ۝ ثُمَّ
اَفِيْضُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ اَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝ فَاِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَّنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ
اٰبَآءَكُمْ اَوْ اَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ؕ فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَاۤ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا
وَمَا لَهٗ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ۝ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَاۤ اٰتِنَا فِى
الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ۝ اُولٰٓئِكَ
لَهُمْ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ۝ وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ
فِىْۤ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ؕ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَاۤ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَمَنْ
تَاَخَّرَ فَلَاۤ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۙ لِمَنِ اتَّقٰى ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْهِ
تُحْشَرُوْنَ ۝

And accomplish the Ḥajj and the '*Umrah* for Allah, but if you are restricted, then whatever available of the animal offering. And shave not your heads until the offering reaches its place. But if anyone of you is ill, or has some trouble with his scalp, then there is a ransom through fasting or alms giving.

And when you are safe, then, whoever avails the advantage of the '*Umrah* alongwith the Ḥajj, shall make whatever available of the animal offering.

And whoever finds none shall fast for three days during Hajj, and for seven days when you return; thus they are ten in all. This is for him whose family are not residents of *Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*. And fear Allah and be aware that Allah is severe at punishment. The Ḥajj is (in) the months well-known. So whoever undertakes Ḥajj therein, then there is no obscenity, no sin, no quarrel in the Ḥajj. And whatever good you do, Allah shall know it.

And take provisions along, for the merit of provision is to abstain (from asking). And fear Me, O men of understanding. There is no sin on you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading).

Later, when you flow down from 'Arafāt, recite the name of Allah near *Al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Monument) and recite His name as He has guided you while before it, you were among the astray. Then flow down from where the people flowed, and seek forgiveness from Allah. Certainly Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.

And once you have fulfilled your rites, recite the name of Allah, as you would speak of your forefathers or even with greater fervor. Now among the people there is one who says: "Our Lord, give to us in this world...;" and he, in the Hereafter, has no share. And there is another among them who says: "Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the punishment of Fire." For them there is a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift at

reckoning. And recite the name of Allah during the given number of days. Then whoever is early in leaving after two days, there is no sin on him and whoever remains behind, there is no sin on him, if he is God-fearing. And fear Allah and be sure that you are going to be gathered before Him. (Verses 196 - 203)

Injunctions concerning Ḥajj and *'Umrah*

In the series of injunctions appearing under the theme of 'righteousness' which has started from verse 177, the eleventh injunction relates to the Ḥajj. Since it is tied to Makkah al-Mukarramah and Ka'bah, the House of Allah, therefore, some relevant questions have been covered partly under the subject of Qiblah from verse 125 to 128 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. They begin from وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً and end, at وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا, then, at the conclusion of the discussion on Qiblah, the injunction of *Sa'y* between *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* has been taken up in verse 158, إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ, as a corollary. Now, Verse 196 - 203, from أَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ to فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ, the eight consecutive verses, present injunctions and questions about *Ḥajj* and *'Umrah*.

The Ḥajj, with the strong consensus of the entire Muslim *Ummah*, is a pillar among the cardinal pillars of Islam and an important obligation. It has been clearly emphasised in the many verses of the Holy Qur'ān and in numerous authentic *aḥādīth*.

According to the majority opinion, the Hajj became an obligation in the third year of *Hijrah*, that is, in the year the battle of *Uḥud* was fought, through the verse وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ (and as a right of Allah, it is obligatory on the people to perform Ḥajj of the House) of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān (Ibn Kathīr). In this verse, conditions of the obligation of Ḥajj have been stated and a stern warning has been given to those who do not perform Ḥajj in spite of having the ability to do that.

Out of the eight verses before us, the first verse وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ (And accomplish the Ḥajj, and the *'Umrah* for Allah) was revealed, as agreed upon by the commentators, pertaining to the event of *Hudaybiyyah* which took place in the year 7 A.H. This tells us that the purpose of the verse is not to declare the initial obligation of the Ḥajj; that has been stated already. Instead, the intention here is to convey some special injunctions governing *Ḥajj* and *'Umrah*.

The Injunction about *'Umrah*

However, Sūrah Āl 'Imrān which declares Ḥajj as an obligation restricts itself to Ḥajj alone; *'Umrah* is not mentioned there, while the present verse mentions *'Umrah*, but does not state whether it is basically 'necessary' or 'obligatory'. It rather says that a person who begins Ḥajj or *'Umrah* by going into *Iḥrām*, then, it becomes *wājib* or necessary for him to complete that, very much like voluntary prayers or fasting where the rule is that after one starts them, their completion becomes necessary. Therefore, we do not find out from this verse the answer to the question: Is *'Umrah wajib*, or is it not? It simply tells us that once one starts it, it becomes *wajib* or necessary for him to complete it.

Ibn Kathīr cites, with reference to al-Tirmidhi, Aḥmad and al-Bayhaqi, a report from the blessed Companion Jābir that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ : 'Is *'Umrah wājib*?' He said: 'Well, not *wājib*, but that you do it is better and meritworthy.' (According to al-Tirmidhī, this *ḥadīth* is *hasan ṣaḥiḥ*). This is why Imam Abu Hanīfah, Imām Malik and others say that *'Umrah* is not *wajib*, but a *sunnah*. Looking back at the statement in the present verse that completing Ḥajj and *'Umrah* after one has gone into *Iḥrām* becomes *wājib* or necessary, we face the question as to what happens if, after entering into the state of *Iḥrām*, there comes up some sort of compulsion which makes it impossible to complete the Ḥajj and *'Umrah*. What has to be done in such cases has been clarified in the succeeding sentence which begins with "but if you are restricted."

Rules concerning *Iḥrām*

As this verse pertains to the event of *Hudaybiyyah* where the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions were in a state of *Iḥrām* and the disbelievers of Makkah had stopped them from entering Makkah and performing *'Umrah*, thereupon came the injunction that the *fidyah* or ransom to get released from the *Iḥram* is to offer the sacrifice of an animal, such as, a goat, cow or camel whichever is easy to get. After the sacrifice has been offered, *Iḥrām* can be removed, but within the next sentence وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ : (And shave not your heads) it has also been pointed out that removing the *Iḥrām*, which is legally possible only after having shaved or close-trimmed the hair on the head, is not

permissible until the sacrificial animal of the person in a state of *Iḥrām* reaches its destined spot and is actually slaughtered.

The expression 'reaching its place', according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, means that it should be taken into the sacred precincts of the *Ḥaram* and slaughtered there. If one cannot do it personally, he can authorise someone else to do it on his behalf. The situation of being 'restricted' by an enemy is clearly mentioned in this verse. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other jurists are of the view that if somebody is unable to complete Hajj or *'Umrah* (after wearing *Iḥrām*) because of sickness, he can also avail of the concession given by this verse, because the words 'if you are restricted' are so general that they include the restriction imposed by sickness also.

The manner in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has practiced the instructions given in the Holy Verse is sufficient to disclose that although it is allowed in such an emergent situation to remove the *Iḥrām* after offering a sacrifice, yet it will remain obligatory to perform the Ḥajj or the *'Umrah* afresh as a *qaḍā'* (whenever the circumstances allow to do so). That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions did perform the *'Umrah* next year as a *qaḍā'* for the *'Umrah* missed by them at *Hudaybiyyah*.

In this verse, the shaving of the head has been indentified as the signal for removing the *Iḥrām* which proves that shaving the head (*ḥalq*) or trimming the hair (*qasr*) in a state of *Iḥrām* is forbidden. In view of this, the next injunction tells us the way out for one who faces a compelling need to shave his head in a state of *Iḥrām*.

Shaving in the state of *Iḥrām*?

In the text of the Holy Qur'ān, it is said: فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا أَوْ بِهٖٓ أَذًى مِّنْ رَّأْسِهٖ, that is, if one is forced to shave hair on the head, or any other part of the body, because of some ailment or irritating lice, one can do so in proportion to the need, but it has to be redeemed by giving *fidyah* in the form of fasting, charity or sacrifice. The place for sacrifice is fixed; it has to be offered within the limits of *Ḥaram*. There is no such fixed place for fasting and charity; these obligations can be accomplished anywhere. The number of fasts and the amount of charity find no mention in the words of the Holy Qur'ān, but in a *ḥadīth* of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prescribed in a similar situation faced

by the noble Companion Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah that he should fast for three days or give 1/2 *sā'* of wheat as charity to six needy persons. This 1/2 *sā'* comes to approximately 1.632 kilograms of wheat or its price in cash.

Combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during Ḥajj months

Before the appearance of Islam, the Arabs in *Jāhiliyyah* would not combine Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during Hajj months, that is, after the advent of Shawwal. They thought it was a sin. Towards the end of this verse, their misconception was corrected by restricting the prohibition on combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during the months of Ḥajj to only those who live within the limits of *Miqāt* because it is not difficult for them to return for *'Umrah* after the Ḥajj months. But, for those coming from outside the *Miqāt* limits, it was declared permissible because it is not easy for them to make a special trip exclusively for *'Umrah* all the way from such distances. *Miqāt* is one of the several stations appointed by Allah Almighty on every route leading to Makkah from all over the world and it has been made obligatory on everyone proceeding to Makkah to wear *Iḥrām* at this point to perform Ḥajj or *'Umrah*. Going beyond this appointed place without *Iḥrām* is a sin. The verse لِمَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِى الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ means just this, that is, combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* is permissible only for a person whose family does not live within the environs of *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, or in other words, within the limits of the appointed stations known as *Miqāt*.

However, those who combine the Ḥajj and *'Umrah* during the Ḥajj months are obligated to demonstrate their gratefulness for having been allowed to combine two acts of *'Ibādah*. This gratitude is expressed by offering a sacrifice, if one is capable of that. This sacrifice may be offered by slaughtering a goat, cow or camel whichever is easy. But, one who is financially incapable of doing so, he is obligated to fast for ten days, the first three within the Ḥajj days completing them by the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah, the rest of seven fasts he can complete after the Hajj at a place and time of his choice. He could do so while living in Makkah or when he returns home. If a person fails to fast for three days during the Ḥajj days, for him, in the view of revered Companions, and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, offering a sacrifice is mandatory. As soon as

it is possible, he can have the sacrifice offered in the *Ḥaram* through someone he knows (Jassas).

Al-Tamattu' and *Al-Qirān*; the two kinds of Ḥajj

Combining the Hajj and *'Umrah* during Ḥajj days takes two forms. The first method is to enter into *Iḥrām* for Ḥajj and *'Umrah* both right from the *Miqāt*. This is known as *Al-Qirān* in the terminology of *hadith*. Under this method the release from the *Ihram* is tied with the release from the *Iḥrām* of Ḥajj. The pilgrim has to stay in a state of *Iḥrām* until the last day of Ḥajj. Under the second method it is possible to enter into *Iḥrām* exclusively for *'Umrah* from a *Miqāt* and after reaching Makkah al-Mukarramah, and performing the fixed rites of *'Umrah* one can get out of the *Ihram*. After that, when getting ready to go to Minā on the eighth of Dhul-Hijjah, he should enter again into the *Iḥrām* of Ḥajj right within the *Ḥaram*. This is technically known as *Al-Tamattu'*. Literally, the word *Tamattu'* covers both methods since it means 'to have the benefit of combining Ḥajj and *'Umrah* both' which is equally applicable to both the methods detailed above. The words فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ (Then, whoever avails of the advantage) in the present verse of the Holy Qur'ān have been used in this general sense.

The warning against violation of rules

The verse 196 ends up with the words 'Fear Allah' which is a command to adopt *Taqwā* - a Qur'ānic term which has no equivalent in the English language, and denotes the attitude of fearing and abstaining from doing anything against rules set by Allah Almighty. This command has been followed by a warning: وَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ (and be aware that Allah is severe at punishment) which means that anyone who knowingly acts against the injunctions revealed by Allah Almighty, for him the punishment of Allah is severe. The people who go in our days for Ḥajj or *'Umrah* are widely negligent of this warning. To begin with, they do not make the necessary effort to find out the rules of Ḥajj and *'Umrah*. Then a good many do not follow the rules strictly, even if they have the knowledge. Bad guides or careless fellow pilgrims sometimes make one miss the obligatory acts, let alone the *sunnah* and the proper etiquette of the pilgrimage. May Allah bless all of us with the ability to correct what we do.

The Ḥajj Months: Prohibitions

We now move to the second verse out of the eight that deal with

the rules of Ḥajj, which is: اَلْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٌ : 'The Ḥajj is (in) the months well-known'. The word, *ashhur* is the plural of *shahr* meaning the month. It will be recalled that in the previous verse it was said that one who enters into *Iḥrām* with the intention of doing Ḥajj or *'Umrah* must complete it as prescribed. Out of these two, there is no fixed date or month for *'Umrah* which could be done anytime during a year. But, for Ḥajj, the months and the dates and timings of what one must do are all fixed. It is for this reason that the verse opens with the clarification that the Ḥajj (unlike *'Umrah*) has some fixed months which are already known. The months of Ḥajj have been the same from *Jāhiliyyah* also; they are Shawwal, Dhul-Qa'dah and the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah as it appears in the *ḥadith* as narrated by the blessed Companions Abū Umamah and Ibn 'Umar (Maẓharī).

That the Ḥajj months begin from Shawwāl means that it is not permissible to enter into the *Iḥrām* of Ḥajj before it. According to some *Imāms*, the Ḥajj would simply not be valid with a pre-Shawwal *Ihram*. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah rules that the Ḥajj thus performed will be considered valid, but it will be *makrūh* (reprehensible) (Maẓharī).

The verse 197, that is فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيْهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَارَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِى الْحَجِّ stresses upon the etiquette of Ḥajj and makes it necessary for everyone in the state of *Iḥrām* to strictly abstain from three things: *rafath*, *fusūq* and *jidāl*, which are being explained here in some detail.

A comprehensive word, *Rafath* includes marital intercourse, its prelimineries, including an open talk about love-making. All these things are forbidden in the state of *Iḥrām*. However, an indirect or implied reference to the act of love-making is not prohibited.

Literally *fusūq* means "transgression". In the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, it means 'disobedience', the general sense of which includes all sins. Early commentators have taken it here in this general sense of the word but the blessed Companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar has interpreted the word '*fusūq*' here to mean only the acts which are prohibited and impermissible in the state of *Iḥrām*. It is obvious that this interpretation is more suitable to the occasion because the prohibition of sins as such is not peculiar to *Iḥrām*; they are forbidden under all conditions.

Things which are not sins in themselves but do become impermis-

sible because of the *Iḥrām* are six in number. (1) Marital intercourse, its prelimineries, even lovetalk. (2) Hunting land game, either hunting personally or guiding a hunter. (3) Cutting hair or nail. (4) Using perfume. These four things are equally impermissible for men and women both when in a state of *Iḥrām*. The remaining two basically concern men: (5) Wearing stitched clothes. (6) Covering the head and the face. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik, it is also not permissible for women to cover their face while in a state of *Iḥrām*, therefore, this too is included in the common *Iḥrām* prohibitions.

The first of the above six things, that is, intercourse and its correlatives, though included under *fusūq*, has yet been separated from it, and has been introduced separately through the word *Rafath*, stressing thereby the importance of abstaining from it when in a state of *Iḥrām*. This is because 'amends' can be made for the contravention of other *Iḥrām* prohibitions through *kaffārah* (expiation). But, should one fall into the misfortune of indulging in intercourse before the *Wuqūf* of 'Arafāt (stay in 'Arafāt) Ḥajj itself becomes null and void and a fine in the form of a sacrifice of a cow or camel becomes obligatory and the Ḥajj will have to be performed all over again. Because this aspect was so important, the text has mentioned it expressly.

The word *'jidāl'* means an effort to upturn the adversary, therefore, a rough altercation or quarrel is known as *jidal*. This word being very general, some commentators have taken it in the usual general sense, while others, keeping in view the place of Ḥajj and the importance of *Iḥrām*, have particularized the sense of *jidāl* here with a specific quarrel. In the age of ignorance, people differed about the prescribed place of *Wuqūf* (staying). Some thought staying in 'Arafat was necessary, while others insisted that Muzdalifah was the prescribed place to stay and, therefore, did not consider going to 'Arafāt as necessary. They even claimed that it was where Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had stayed. Similarly, they differed in the timings of the Ḥajj as well. Some would do their Ḥajj in Dhul-Hijjah while some others would do it earlier in Dhul-Qa'dah and then, they would all quarrel among themselves around the subject and charge each other of having gone astray. The Holy Qur'ān said *Lā jidāl*, no quarrel, and put an end to all quarrels. What was proclaimed was the truth - the obligatory stay has to be

made in 'Arafāt, then, the necessary stay in Muzdalifah, and Ḥajj has to be performed in no other days but those of Dhul-Hijjah. Once the divine command is there, quarreling is forbidden.

According to this interpretation, the prohibition given in the verse is restricted to those acts only which are normally permissible, yet, they have been forbidden because of the *Iḥrām*, just as the permissible acts of eating and drinking are forbidden in the state of Fasting and *Ṣalāh* only.

But some commentators have taken *fusūq* and *jidāl* in the general sense. According to them even though the *fisq* and *jidāl* are sins, and deplorable at all places and under all conditions, but their sin becomes all the more grave in the state of *Iḥrām*. If one could think about the blessed days and the sacred land of the *Ḥaram* where everyone comes to perform *'ibādah* at its best with fervent chants of *labbayk*, telling their Lord 'Here we are at Your call', with the garment of *Iḥrām* reminding them all the time that the pilgrim is devoted to his act of *'ibādah* within the sight of Allah, how could one stoop to do what is prohibited by Allah; obviously, under such condition, any act of sin or any act of entanglement with dispute turns into sinfulness at its worst.

Taking this general sense into account, one can see the wisdom behind the prohibition of obscenity, sin and quarrel as the place and time of Ḥajj have their peculiar conditions in which one might fall a victim to these three. There are times when one has to stay away from his family and children for a long time in a state of *Iḥrām*. Then, men and women perform Ḥajj rites at *Maṭāf* (the place around the Ka'bah where *tawaf* is made) and *Mas'ā* (place between *Ṣafā* and *Marwah* were *Sa'y* is made) and at 'Arafāt, Muzdalifah and Minā with hundreds and thousands of people coming in contact with each other. In such an enormous gathering of men and women, it is not so easy to control one's inner desires, therefore, Allah Almighty has first taken up the prohibition of obscenity. Then, since so many people are around at a given time, all deeply devoted to performing their prescribed rites, there are also occasions where sins such as theft creep in, therefore, came the instruction: *lā fusūq* (no sin). Similarly, during the entire Ḥajj trip, there are many incidents where people could get to quarrel

with each other because they are cramped for space or for some other reason. The injunction: *lā jidāl* (no quarrel) is to eliminate such possibilities.

The eloquence of the Qur'an

The words in the verse: فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ translated literally as 'then there is no obscenity, no sin, no quarrel ...' are all words of negation, that is, all these things are not there in Hajj, although the object is to forbid them, which could have taken the form close to saying - do not be obscene, do not be sinful and do not quarrel. But, the possible prohibitive imperative has been replaced here by words of negation and thereby the hint has been given that such doings have no place in Hajj and cannot even be imagined in that context.

After proclaiming basic *Iḥrām* prohibitions, the sentence: وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَّعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ (And whatever good you do, Allah shall know it) instructs that abstaining from sins and the contravention of the *Iḥrām* during the blessed days of Hajj and at sacred places is not enough. Taking a step farther, one should consider this occasion to be something that comes once in a lifetime, therefore, it is all the more necessary that one should make an effort to stay devoted to *'ibadah*, the *Dhikr* (ذکر: also transliterated as *'Thikr'*, or *'Zikr'*, meaning 'remembrance') of Allah and good deeds. The assurance given is that every act of virtue and every demonstration of goodness from a servant of Allah shall be in the knowledge of Allah and, of course, shall be rewarded generously.

The sentence that follows immediately: وَتَزَوَّدُوْا فَاِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوٰى : 'And take provisions along, for the merit of provision is to abstain (from asking)' aims to correct those who leave their homes for Hajj and *'Umrah* without adequate preparation claiming that they do so because they have trust in Allah. Obviously, they have to ask for help on their way, or worse still, they themselves go through privation and suffering and in the process, bother others as well. Hence, the instruction has been given that provisions needed for the proposed trip for Hajj should be taken along. This is not against *tawakkūl* or trust in Allah; it is rather, the very essence of *tawakkul*, which conveys the sense that one should first acquire and collect the means and resources provided by Allah Almighty to the best of one's capability and, then, place his trust (*tawakkūl*) in Allah. This is the exact

explanation of *tawakkūl* reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Forsaking all efforts to acquire means of subsistence (*tark al-asbab*) and calling it *tawakkūl* is sheer ignorance.

Trading or earning during the Ḥajj

Verse 198: لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ : 'There is no sin on you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading)' was revealed in a particular background of the *Jāhiliyyah* when the people of Arabia had distorted all rules of worship and social dealings by injecting in them all sorts of absurd customs rendering acts of devotion into amusement. They would not even spare the sacred rites of Hajj when they added to them ridiculous doings out of their wild imagination. In the great gathering at Minā, they would set up special bazaars, hold exhibitions, and put up trade promotion devices. But after the appearance of Islam when Muslims were obligated with Ḥajj, all these absurd customs were eliminated. The noble Companions رضی الله عنهم اجمعین , who would stake anything to seek the pleasure of Allah and to follow the teachings of His Messenger, started suspecting the validity of even the acts of trading or working for wages during Ḥajj days. They thought that earning in this manner is an outgrowth of the age of ignorance, may be Islam shall forbid it absolutely, so much so, that a certain person came to the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar and asked: 'We are in the business of renting our camels. We have been doing it since long. People hire our camels to go for their Ḥajj. We go with them and perform our Ḥajj. Is it that our Ḥajj will not be valid?' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar said: 'Some one came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked the same question you are asking me. The Holy Prophet ﷺ did not reply to his question at that particular time until the verse : لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ was revealed. Then, he called for that person and said, 'Yes, your Ḥajj is valid.'

In short, this verse makes it clear that a person, who earns some profit by trading, or wages by working, incurrs no sin. However, the practice of the disbelievers of Arabia whereby they had turned the Ḥajj into a trade fair was reformed through two simple words of the Qur'ān to the effect that they can earn if they have to, but let them earn what they do as a favour and blessing of Allah Almighty, and be grateful for it, never making it a material exercise of minting money. The words, فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ : 'the bounty of your Lord' point out to this factor.

Then, the expression: لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ preceding the words referred to above means that 'there is no sin on you' in this indulgence in earning which has a built-in hint that avoiding this indulgence too, if possible, is still better because it affects the ideal of perfect sincerity so desirable in the Ḥajj.

This whole issue, in fact, revolves round the original intention of a person. If his basic intention is to earn money through trading or employment but he has decided to perform the Ḥajj as an adjunct, or both the intentions are equally kept in mind, then, this is contrary to the ideal of sincerity and it will reduce the reward of Ḥajj and the blessings of Ḥajj would not fall to his lot as they normally would. And should it be that he leaves his home with the basic intention to perform his Ḥajj, but runs into unforeseen problems accidentally resulting in a shortage of Hajj expenses or needs of subsistence, he then, could go for a little earning through trading or employment to offset his shortage of need-oriented funds. This is, in no way, contrary to the ideal of sincerity. However, for one who has to do so, it is much better that he leaves the five special days of Ḥajj rites free of any engagement in trading or employment. Instead, he should devote these days to nothing but *'ibādah* and *dhikr* of Allah. This is the reason why some *'ulamā'* have ruled that trading or employment during these special days of Ḥajj are forbidden.

Staying in 'Arafāt and Muzdalifah:

The next statement in the same verse (198) is:

فَإِذَآ أَفَضْتُم مِّنْ عَرَفَٰتٍ فَٱذْكُرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عِندَ ٱلْمَشْعَرِ ٱلْحَرَامِ وَٱذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَىٰكُمْ وَإِن كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلِهِۦ لَمِنَ ٱلضَّآلِّينَ ○

> Later, when you flow down from 'Arafāt, recite the name of Allah near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Monument) and recite His name as He has guided you, while before it, you were among the astray.

The verse tells us that, on the way back from 'Arafāt, it is necessary (*wājib*) to stay overnight in Muzdalifah and to recite the name of Allah there, specially as taught.

Literally, 'Arafāt is plural in number. This is the name of a particular plain. Its geographical boundries are well-known. This plain

is located outside the limits of *Ḥaram*. All *ḥujjāj* (Ḥajj pilgrims) must reach and stay there between noon (*zawāl*) and sunset (*ghurūb*) hours. This is the most important obligation of Ḥajj for which, if missed out, there is no alternative in the form of *kaffārah* (expiation) or *fidyah* (ransom).

Several causes have been cited for the name, 'Arafāt. Out of these, the clearer explanation is that 'Arafāt is a plain where man gets to know his Lord and, through his *'ibādah* and *dhikr*, learns how to get closer to Him,and in addition to that, Muslims from the East and the West meet and know each other by direct contact.

Emphasis has been laid in the text on the stay near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām* on the way back from 'Arafāt after having spent the day there and after having departed the plain soon after sunset. *Al-Mash'ar Al-Ḥarām* is the name of a mountain which is located in Muzdalifah. The word, '*al-mash'ar*' means 'sign' or 'symbol', and '*ḥaram*' being 'sacred', the name signifies that this mountain is a sacred monument to Islam. The plain adjacent is called Muzdalifah. It is necessary (*wājib*) to spend the night on this plain and offer the combined prayers of *Maghrib* and *'Ishā'* at one time in Muzdalifah. The Qur'ānic expression: فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ translated as 'recite the name of Allah near *al-Mash'ar al-Ḥarām*' certainly includes all kinds of the remembrances of Allah, but here it particularly means the offering of two prayers at one time, that is, offering *Maghrib* with *'Ishā'*. This is the special act of *'ibādah* peculiar to the plain of Muzdalifah. Perhaps, the sentence that follows: وَاذْكُرُوْهُ كَمَا هَدٰىكُمْ (recite his name as He has guided you) is indicative of this aspect. It is said that one should remember Allah and recite His name in the manner He has taught without adulterating it with personal opinions because personal deduction would have demanded that the *Ṣalāh* of *Maghrib* be offered at the time set for it and the *Ṣalāh* of *'Ishā'* at its own time. But, on that day, Allah Almighty favours that the *Ṣalāh* of *Maghrib* be delayed and offered along with *'Ishā'*. From the Qur'ānic statement cited above, recite His name as He has guided you', we see the emergence of yet another basic ruling that man is not independent in worshipping and remembering Allah, that is, he cannot worship Him as he wishes and he cannot remember Him as he chooses. Instead, every *'ibādah* and

dhikr of Allah demands the observance of special rules of etiquette. These have to be performed as stipulated; doing it otherwise is not permissible. Then, Allah Almighty does not like any substraction or addition, nor any change in its prescribed time or place, even though the change may lead to an increase in the act of worship. It is observed that people tend to add some features in voluntary prayers and acts of charity from their side without having any reason approved by the Shari'ah, and going a step farther, they take it upon themselves as something necessary while Allah and His blessed Messenger did not declare it as necessary, and last but not the least, such people have the audacity to regard those who do not do all that as in error. This verse exposes their false position by saying that such additional forms of worship reflect the practice of *Jāhiliyyah* when the disbelievers had used their personal opinions and choices to concoct forms of worship and had limited the serious act to few customs.

The third verse (199): ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (Then, flow down from where the people flowed, and seek forgiveness from Allah. Certainly, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) was revealed in a particular background. The Quraysh of Arabia being the custodians of the Ka'bah enjoyed a unique position of influence and distinction in the country. During the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, while everyone went to 'Arafāt, the Quraysh would, in order to demonstrate their unusual importance, stop at Muzdalifah and stay there. They said that, being the custodian of the Ka'bah and the care-takers of the *Ḥaram*, it was not proper for them to go out of the limits of the *Ḥaram*. Since Muzdalifah is located within the sacred limits of the *Ḥaram* and 'Arafāt is out of it, they would seize upon the excuse, stay in Muzdalifah and it was from there that they came back. The truth was that they loved to show off their pride and arrogance and made it a point to keep common people at a distance. Their erroneous conduct thus apprehended, Allah Almighty commanded them to go where everyone goes, that is, into the plain of 'Arafāt, and then, return from there with everyone else (it will be noted that in the accompanying translation of the text, the Qur'ānic word *afiḍū* has been rendered into English literally with the word, 'flow' which succinctly suggests mingling with the multitude, something shunned by the Quraysh of *Jāhiliyyah*).

To begin with, behaving special and staying disconnected from

others is a standing act of arrogance which must almost always be avoided, particularly during the days of Ḥajj where the garment of *Iḥrām* and the homogeneity of place and purpose teach the lesson that all human beings are equal, the distinction of rich and poor, learned and ignorant, big and small does not exist here, therefore, such display of assumed distinction, and that too in a state of *Iḥrām*, further increases the degree of crime.

Human equality in practice

This statement of the Holy Qur'ān teaches us an important principle of social living which demands that the the people of a higher status should not cut off their relations with those of a lower status; they should rather behave like members of a large family in their different forms of subsistence, stay and movement. This creates mutual brotherhood, concern and love, removes the walls between the rich and the poor, the employer and the employee. It was during his last sermon of Ḥajj that the Holy Prophet ﷺ openly declared for all times to come that no Arab is superior to non-Arab and no white person is superior to a black person. Superiority depends on *Taqwā* and *Iṭā'ah* (the fear of Allah and the obedience to His command). Therefore, those who wanted to establish a distinct status for themselves by staying at Muzdalifah, contrary to the rest, were told that this act of theirs was a sin and they must seek forgiveness for it so that Allah Almighty may forgive them and bless them with His mercy.

The prohibition of *Jāhilī* customs at Minā

In the verses 199 to 201, some *Jāhilī* customs have been corrected. One of these was that the Arabs of the *Jāhiliyyah* would, once they had finished their rites at 'Arafat and Muzdalifah and performed their *tawāf* and sacrifice and stay in Minā, hold gatherings to recite poetry and to eulogize the achievements of their forefathers. Such gatherings were obviously devoid of the remembrance of Allah. It was strange that they elected to waste such blessed days in activities which were of no consequence in relation to what they were supposed to do there. Therefore, they were told that, as soon as they have completed their *Iḥrām* rites and come to stay at Minā, they should dedicate their stay to the remembrance of Allah and leave out the practice of indulging in

the reminiscences of their forefathers, specially the boastful claims about their achievements. Better still was to remember Allah, not them, and that too with greater attachment and fervor. There was nothing like being engaged in the *dhikr* of Allah. So, the Holy Qur'ān guides Muslims to shun the customs coming from the age of ignorance, specially in the great days of Ḥajj they have been blessed with, which are exclusively reserved for *'ibādah* and *dhikr* and have merits and blessings of their own, a gift from Allah which may not be available again if lost through carelessness.

In addition to that, the Ḥajj is a special act of worship which one gets to perform only after a long and generally exacting journey, separation from family and business and great expense of money and time. That unforeseen circumstances prevail is not a far-out prospect. It is quite possible that one fails to achieve the long-cherished objective of Ḥajj, inspite of all efforts and expenses. Now, if Allah Almighty has, in His infinite grace, removed all impediments and one has accomplished his Ḥajj obligation by successfully performing all required rites, then, the occasion calls for gratitude which further demands that one should keep busy in remembering Allah, avoid wasteful gatherings, engagements or conversations. Compared with the time spent by the people of *Jāhiliyyah* in forefather tale-telling which brought them no benefit here, or there, the thing to do here is the *dhikr* of Allah which is all radiance and benefit for this world, and for the Hereafter. No doubt, contemporary Muslims do not follow the custom of *Jāhiliyyah* any more by holding poetic recitals to eulogize their family trees, but there are thousands of Muslims from all over the world who still spend out these precious days of Ḥajj in wasteful gatherings, entertainments, amusements, shoppings and similar other pursuits of personal satisfaction. This verse is enough to warn them.

Some commentators have explained this verse by dwelling upon the analogy of 'father' used here, in some detail. They say that one should remember Allah as one remembered his father during his childhood when he was dependant on his father for everything. If man were to think when he is young, adult and rational, is he not far more dependant on Allah Almighty at all times and under all conditions, certainly much more than a child was on his father? As for the boastful claims about the honour of their fathers, something the people

of *Jāhiliyyah* used to make, this verse eliminates that too by saying that real honour comes through the *dhikr* of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

Moderation in religious and worldly pursuits

Besides what the people of *Jāhiliyyah* used to do during their stay at Minā, some of them had another habit during the Ḥajj. Normally, they would be engaged in acts of devotion to Allah, yet when it came to making a prayer, they would focus all their attention to praying for worldly needs, such as, comfort, wealth, honour and their likes, showing no concern for the life to come. It was to correct this sort of approach in supplication that it was said that there are people who would use the great occasion of Ḥajj to pray for the insignificant gains of the present life and forget the Hereafter. For such people the Hereafter holds nothing because their conduct shows that they have gone through the obligation of Ḥajj merely in a formal manner, or have done it to earn prestige in their society. To please Allah and to earn salvation in the Hereafter are objectives alien to them.

It may be noted at this point that the verse mentions those who pray by saying: رَبَّنَا اٰتِنَا فِی الدُّنْیَا (Our Lord, give to us in this world ....) which does not include the word, حَسَنَةً (good). This indicates that they do not care to have what is really good even in this mortal world, on the contrary, they are so drunk with their craze for material things that nothing short of a constant fulfilment of their desires would satisfy them. They just do not bother to check if it is good or bad, procured rightly or wrongly or what people think about them.

This verse extends a serious warning to those Muslims as well who prefer to pray for their material ends only even at the unique time of Ḥajj and at places so sacred, devoting most of their concerns towards that goal. There are many rich people who themselves pray, or request others they hold in esteem to pray for them, not for deliverance from the accounting of the *Ākhirah*, but for increase in their wealth, growth in business, and for other worldly concerns. There are many who, by their profusion in *waẓā'if* and *nawāfil* (voluntary acts of worship), come to believe that they are very devoted, pious and special. In reality, hidden behind this facade is the same love of the mundane life. Then, there are respected people who maintain relations with pious elders of

their time, as well as show their regard for deceased saints and *walīs*, but the prevailing aim of such relationships is the vague hope that their *du'ā* and *ta'wīdh* (prayers and spiritual charms) will work for them, wordly hardships will stay away, and their belongings shall be blessed. For such people too, this verse has special instructions. Stressed here is the fact that this whole affair rests in the hands of Allah who is All-Knowing and All-Aware. Everyone must assess his or her deeds, specially the intention behind whatever is done during the Ḥajj or *Ziārah*, which includes all *waẓā'if, nawāfil, du'ā* and *ṣalāh*. Then, towards the later part of the verse, Allah Almighty refers to His virtuous and favoured servants - may be some of them are less prosperous in a material way - by saying:

مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ O

And there is another among them who says: "O our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the punishment of Fire."

The word, حَسَنَةً : (*ḥasanah*) used here is inclusive of all that is good, inwardly or outwardly. For instance, *ḥasanah* or 'good in this world' shall include personal and family health, increase and benedictory sufficiency (*barakah*) in lawful livelihood, the fulfilment of all needs, virtuous deeds, desirable morals, beneficial knowledge, honour and prestige, strength of faith, guidance into the straight path and perfect sincerity in *'ibādāt*. Similarly, *ḥasanah* or 'good in the Hereafter' shall cover everything from the Paradise, with its countless and endless blessings to the pleasure of Allah Almighty and the privilege of seeing Him.

In short, this *du'ā* is a compedium of all prayers in as much as it encompasses the entire range of man's wordly and other-worldly objectives. Apart from enjoying peace in the world, and peace in the Hereafter, the verse, refers in the end to the safety from 'the punishment of Fire' as well. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to pray with these words very frequently :

رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ O

Rabbanā 'ātinā fid-dunyā ḥasanah, wa fil-'ākhirati hasanah, wa qinā 'adhaban-nār.

> Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the punishment of Fire.

It is *masnūn* to make this prayer particularly while making *tawāf*. This verse also corrects those ignorant dervishes (so called mystics) who think that real *'ibādah* lies in praying for the Hereafter alone and claim that they do not, on that count, care much about the mortal world. In reality, such a claim is false, for man depends on fulfilling his worldly needs not only for his life and sustenance, but also for performing the acts of worship and obedience. Without these, serving the objectives of faith would become impossible. Therefore, the blessed practice of the prophets of Allah has been that they prayed to Allah for the good of both the worlds. One who thinks that praying to Allah for the fulfillment of his worldly needs is against the norms of piety and spiritual dignity is unaware of the great station of prophethood, and ignorant of man's own role in this mortal world. So, what is required is that one should not focus all his attention on his material needs as if they were the very purpose of life, but he should, along with it, show far more concern for what would happen to him in the Hereafter, and pray for it.

In the concluding part of this verse, the end of the other class of people who pray for the good of the *dunyā* (mortal world) and *ākhirah* (Hereafter) both has been stated by saying that they will be rewarded in both the worlds for their correct and righteous conduct and for their prayers. Following that, it has been said: وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ (And Allah is swift at reckoning) because His all-pervading knowledge and most perfect power is sufficient to assess the life-long deeds of each and every person who ever breathed in His creation; for this He needs none of those computing mechanisms and means on which only man depends. So, the time will soon come when He shall make man account for what he did, and it will be on the basis of that accounting that he will spread out His reward and punishment.

The emphasis on remembering Allah in Minā

In the last of the eight verses relating to injunctions about Ḥajj, that is, وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ (And recite the name of Allah in the given number of days), the Ḥajj pilgrims have been asked to engage themselves in the remembrance of Allah so that their Ḥajj meets a perfect ending and their post-Ḥajj life becomes correct and fruitful.

These 'given number of days' refer to أيام التشريق : (*ayyām al-tashrīq*) during which it is necessary (*wājib*) to say *takbīr* (which is, الله اكبر الله اكبر لا اله الا الله والله اكبر الله اكبر ولله الحمد).

Immediately following is a clarification of the duration of stay at Minā and the deadline for throwing pebbles at the three Pillars. This was an issue debated by the people of *Jāhiliyyah*. Some thought it was necessary to stay at Minā upto the 13th of Dhul-Hijjah and throw pebbles at the three Pillars. According to them, to come back from Minā on the 12th was impermissible and those who did so were sinners. Similarly, others regarded coming back on the 12th necessary, and staying there through the 13th, a sin. Both were corrected in this verse by saying: فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَآ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَآ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ : 'Then whoever is early (in leaving) after two days there is no sin on him and whoever remains behind, there is no sin on him ...' thereby proving that both parties calling each other sinners are involved in excess and error.

The correct position is that Ḥajj pilgrims have the option of acting on either of the two permissions. However, it is better and preferable to stay there through the third day (that is, 13th of Dhul-Hijjah). Jurists say that one who leaves Minā before sunset on the second day (i.e. 12th of Dhul-Hijjah), it is not necessary for him to do his *ramy* (throwing of pebbles on the three Pillars) for the third day. But, should the sun set while he is still in Minā, it does not remain anymore permissible for him to leave Minā until he has done his *ramy* for the third day. However, the *ramy* for the third day has a special concession that it can also be done between the post-morning and pre-noon hours.

If we look at the manner in which the choice of returning from Mina has been given to the *Ḥujjāj* - no sin if they return on the second day and no sin if they return on the third day - we shall realize that all this is for the convenience of one who fears Allah and obeys His commands, for he really deserves the Ḥajj, as said elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ which means that Allah Almighty accepts (acts of prayer and worship) only from those who are God-fearing and obedient. Now, one who has been involved in sins much before Ḥajj, continued being negligent even during the Ḥajj and was callous enough not to abstain from sins even after Ḥajj, his Ḥajj is certainly not going to be of any good to him, although, the formal obligation has

been validly fulfilled, releasing him from the possible crime of not having performed the Ḥajj.

Closing this eight-verse unit, it was said: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ (And fear Allah and be sure that you are going to be gathered before Him), where He shall make you account for all your open and hidden deeds and give you the reward and punishment for these. This last line is really the essence of all Ḥajj injunctions given in these verses. It means that one should keep fearing Allah during the special days of the Ḥajj guarding oneself from any shortcoming in the prescribed acts of Ḥajj, as he should keep fearing Allah after the Ḥajj guarding himself against any pride of performance, and keep abstaining from sins because, on the day human deeds shall be weighed on the Balance, his sins will eat away his good deeds, that is, they will nullify the effect and weight of those good deeds. In a *ḥadith* about the great *'ibādah* of Ḥajj, it has been said that one who returns after having accomplished his Ḥajj, is so cleansed of his sins as if he was born on that day. This is why those performing Ḥajj have been instructed to maintain the quality of *Taqwā*, (that vital sense of responsibility before Allah). Being one who has been purified from sins, it is necessary to take all possible precautions against what tempts man to fall into sin so that one can earn the best of both the worlds, the *dunyā* and the *ākhirah*. If this is not done and the performer of Ḥajj goes back to a life of sin, even after such a cathartic experience, he shall find that the elimination of his past sins by forgiveness is not going to be of any use to him. Contrary to this, the *'ulamā'* have said that one who returns from his Ḥajj with his heart free from the love of *dunya* and attracted to the concern for the *ākhirah*, his Ḥajj is accepted and his sins are forgiven and his prayers are answered. From place to place during the Ḥajj, people pledge their obedience to Allah before His House, how can these pledges be thoughtlessly broken after the Ḥajj? If those who are lucky to perform their Hajj are a little more mindful of this factor, they might stay by their solemn pledge later on.

A pious elder said: 'When I returned from Ḥajj, it was by chance that a suggestion of sin crept into my heart whereupon I heard a voice

from the Unseen: Didn't you perform the Ḥajj? Didn't you perform the Ḥajj? This voice became a wall between me and that sin. Allah Almighty protected me.'

As against this, there is the case of another pious man from Turkey, who was a disciple of the famous Maulanā Jāmī. He was in such an unusual state of spiritual excellence in his normal life that he used to observe a halo of radiance over his head. He went to perform his Hajj, but after his return he discovered that he has lost that unusual state totally. He talked about it to his master, Maulanā Jāmī. He said: 'Before your Hajj, you had the gift of humbleness, you wept before Allah thinking of yourself as a sinner. After your Ḥajj, you became proud and picked up the airs of someone righteous, spiritually elevated. Therefore, this very Ḥajj of yours became the cause of your pride and that is why you lost that state of radiance.'

The emphasis on *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) towards the conclusion of Ḥajj injunctions has yet another secret. It goes without saying that Ḥajj is a great act of *'ibādah*. Once it has been accomplished, that eternal adversary of man, the Satan, generally injects into man's heart the thought of self-righteousness which simply ruins all his deeds. Therefore, the final word said was about the need to fear Allah and the necessity to obey Him, not only before the Ḥajj and during the Ḥajj , but also after the Ḥajj when one must become much more particular in fearing Allah and alert in abstaining from sins by conscious effort, lest all that one has done in the form of the *'ibādah* of Ḥajj goes waste.

اللهم وفقنا لما تحب وترضى من القول والفعل والنية

O Allah, give us the ability to do what You love and are pleased with - in word, deed and intention.

Verses 204 - 207

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهٗ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ
عَلٰى مَا فِىْ قَلْبِهٖ ۙ وَهُوَ اَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ ۝ وَاِذَا تَوَلّٰى سَعٰى فِى
الْاَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيْهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ

الْفَسَادَ O وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهُ
جَهَنَّمُ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ O وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْرِى نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ O

And among men there is one whose words, in this life, attract you; he even makes Allah his witness on what is there in his heart, while he is so stiff-necked when quarreling. And once he turns back, he runs about in the earth trying to spread disorder therein, and to destroy the tillage and the stock; and Allah does not like disorder. When it is said to him, "Fear Allah", he is overcome by the arrogance (he has) for sin. The hell is then enough for him, and it is, indeed an evil bed to rest. And among men there is one who sells his very self to seek the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is compassionate to His servants. (Verses 204 - 207)

In the previous verses, it was said that there are two kinds of those who make prayers. Some wish to have everything right here in this world, others pray for the good of both worlds, the mortal and the eternal. In the present verse, the same two kinds have been identified as those who are hypocritical and those who are sincere.

Verses 204-206 refer to a hypocrite, Akhnas ibn Shurayq known for his eloquence. He would come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and try to impress him with his sworn allegiance to Islam, but no sooner did he walk out of his company than he would get busy with his anti-Muslim mischief-making. Any effort to make such a person fear Allah takes him to the other extreme when he pleases his pride through sin. So, 'the Hell is enough for him.'

Commentary

The last verse (207) portrays the true, the sincere Muslim who would stake his very life to achieve the good pleasure of Allah Almighty. This verse has been revealed to honour the sincere Companions who offered unmatched sacrifices in the way of Allah. It has been reported by Ḥākim, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, with sound authorities, that this verse was revealed in connection with a particular event relating to the blessed Companion Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī. It has been reported that soon after he left Makkah on his emigration

route to Madīnah, he was accosted on his way by a group of disbelievers of the Quraysh. Seeing this, Companion Suhayb dismounted, took position, pulled out all the arrows from his quiver and said to the group: 'O tribe of Quraysh, you all know that I am far better in archery than any of you here. My arrow never misses its target. Now, I swear by Allah that you shall not reach me until there remains even one arrow in my quiver. Then, after arrows, I shall use my sword as long as I can. Only after that you can do what you can. However, if you want to make a deal, I can tell you where my money is in Makkah. You go and take that and let me go my way.' The confronting group of Quraysh agreed to do so. When Companion Ṣuhayb reached Madīnah, safe and unharmed, he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and told him everything about the incident. Upon this, he said twice:

ربح البيع ابا يحيى ربح البيع ابا يحيى

Profitable was your deal Abū Yaḥyā, profitable was your deal Abū Yaḥyā!

The revelation of the verse under reference in connection with this particular event confirms the blessed comment made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

However, some commentators cite similar events relating to other noble Companions as the background of the verse's revelation (Mazharī).

Verses 208 - 210

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ادْخُلُوْا فِى السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَّلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝ فَاِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْكُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝ هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَقُضِىَ الْاَمْرُ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ۝

O those who believe, enter Islam completely, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely, for you, he is an open enemy. And if you slip, even after clear signs have come to you, then you must know that Allah is mighty, wise. They are looking forward to nothing but

that Allah comes upon them in canopies of cloud with the angels and the matter is closed. And to Allah all matters are returned. (Verses 208 - 210)

The previous verses ended with a word of praise for the sincere. As sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) can sometimes touch the limits of excess inadvertently, that is, one does intend to come up with more obedience, but that obedience, when observed carefully, turns out to be exceeding the limits set by the Sharī'ah and *Sunnah*. This is called *bid'ah*. This can be explained through the example of the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and others who were, previous to their Islam, known scholars among the Jews. Since Saturday was the sacred day of rest (the Sabbath) in Judaism, and camel-meat was unlawful, they thought, once they were in Islam, to bring about some sort of a synthesis between the two faiths, through which they could continue to honour Sabbath as it was necessary under the law of Moses while Islam did not require dishonouring it; and similarly, they could simply avoid eating camel-meat in practice while believing that it was lawful, for it was unlawful in the law of Moses but Islam does not make it obligatory to eat it. Thus, they thought that they would stay in touch with the law of Moses and still not go against the Sharī'ah of Muḥammad ﷺ , something that appealed to them as a stronger demonstration of obedience to divine laws and a closer approach to matters of faith. Allah Almighty corrects this thought in the present verse which aims to establish that Islam is an obligation in its totality. It is total and perfect only when what is not necessary in Islam is not considered to be a part of it. To take such thought or practice as part of the Faith is a Satanic slip which may bring far more severe a punishment than common sins would.

It is in this background of the verse's revelation, that believers have been asked to 'enter Islam completely', not making allowances for a faith other than Islam - a divisive approach which makes one an easy target of Satan. Therefore, the prohibition 'do not follow the footsteps of Satan', an enemy who would cheat you into taking to something which obviously looks very much like your Faith, but happens to be totally contrary to it in reality. After having received clear laws and rules that lead to the straight path, there is no justification left for any deviation. Those who still slip, they must

remember that Allah is Mighty, having the power to punish, and Wise too, lest one should misread any delay in punishment which comes when His Wisdom so dictates. Using an eloquent image, the text goes on to question the ultimate acceptance of truth at a time when it shall no longer remain worth accepting and all matters of reward and punishment shall revert to Allah with no power existing other than Him, why then would anyone become quixotic enough to stand against a Power so obvious, the result of which could be nothing but destruction.

Commentary

The word, سِلْم : (*silm*) in اُدْخُلُوا فِی السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً translated here as 'enter Islam completely', is used to convey two meanings, 'peace' and 'Islam'. At this place, according to the consensus of the Companions and their successors, it means Islam (Ibn Kathir). The word كَآفَّة : (*kāffah*) means 'totally' and 'universally'. In the structural scheme of the sentence, this word appears as *hal* (an adverb, qualifying the verb before it with a particular state). There are two possibilities here. Firstly, the word be taken as the *hāl* of the pronoun in اُدْخُلُوا : (*udkhulū*) in which case the translation would be referring to the condition of the believers while entering Islam, which must be 'complete'. This would mean that their entire person, hands and feet, eyes and ears, feeling and thinking, after having embraced the Faith should all be within the parameters of Islam and the obedience to Allah. This is to warn against a state of being in which one may be physically carrying out the dictates of Islam while the heart and the mind are not fully satisfied, or in case, the heart and the mind are satisfied, yet what one does physically remains outside the pale of Islam.

Secondly, it is possible to take the word, *silm* as the *hāl* or indicated state of the Faith in Islam, in which case, the translation would be referring to the perfect and complete state of Islam in which the believers must enter. So, 'entering Islam completely' would mean that one must accept all injunctions of Islam, not that one accepts some and hesitates about others. Since Islam is the name of that particular way of life which has been given through the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, therefore, it does not matter, which facet of life it concerns, it may be beliefs and acts of worship or social dealings or business transactions or government and politics or trade and industry or any other field; what

matters is one's entry into Islam as a complete system, an organic whole, unified, indivisible.

The gist of the two approaches given above is that no Muslim shall be deserving of calling himself a Muslim unless he accepts all Islamic injunctions truly and sincerely from the deep recesses of his heart, irrespective of the department of life they belong to, irrespective of whether they concern the outward physique of the body or the heart and the mind.

The background of the verse's revelation mentioned earlier in the introductory remarks also shows that one must keep nothing but the teachings of Islam in sight, practice it in its entirety which will, in consequence, make Muslims independent of all religions and nations.

Special Note

The verse holds out a stern warning to those who have got Islam all tied up with *masjid* and *'ibādāt* (mosque and the performance of acts of prescribed worship) neglecting injunctions relating to social living and business and personal dealings as if they were no part of religion. This negligence is wide-spread among the 'technically' religious people who do not seem to care much about rights and dealings, specially social rights. It appears that they do not regard these injunctions to be the injunctions of Islam, neither do they make an effort to find out what they are, or try to learn them in an orderly manner, nor think of acting in accordance with these injunctions. We seek refuge with Allah.

As regards the possibility of 'Allah Almighty and the angels coming upon them in canopies of clouds,' this will be on Doomsday. The correct position is that such coming of Allah Almighty belongs to the *Mutashābihāt*, statements of hidden meaning, about which there is a standard policy practiced by the majority of the blessed Companions, the Tābi'īn, their successors, and the revered elders of the Muslim *ummah*, that is, one must believe in its truth and avoid worrying about as to how this would happen because it is beyond human reason to find out the reality and the nature, the whats and the hows of the 'Being' and the Attributes of Allah Almighty, and this too is included therein.

Verses 211 - 212

سَلْ بَنِيٓ إِسْرَآءِيلَ كَمْ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍۭ بَيِّنَةٍ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ
اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ 0 زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُوْنَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۘ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا
فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ 0

Ask the Children of Isra'il how many a clear sign We have given them. And whoever changes the blessing of Allah after it has come to him, then Allah is severe at punishment. Adorned is the present life for those who disbelieve and they laugh at those who believe while those who fear Allah shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection. And Allah gives, to whom He wills, without measure. (Verses 211 - 212)

Immediately earlier, it was said that opposing truth after clear signs have come, deserves punishment. The first verse here (211) cites the case of the elders of Banī Isrā'īl who were punished for their hostility to truth despite clear signs given to them.

Rather than follow the blessed guidance given to them, they chose to stray away from it and, as a result, underwent punishments, for instance, they received the Torah which deserved being accepted but they denied it, consequent to which, they were threatened with Mount Sinai coming down upon them. Again, they heard the Word of Allah which they should have loved and respected but they tinkered with doubts in it and consequently, were struck dead by lightening. Then, again, they were delivered from the Pharaoh through a passage-way made by parting the river, but they showed no gratitude, instead, took to the calf for which they were killed. Further again, they should have been grateful when *Mann* and *Salwā* was sent for them but they disobeyed and spoilage set in. When they showed their distaste for it, it stopped coming, throwing them into the toil of growing their own food. Lastly, the chain of prophets that appeared among them from time to time should have been a matter of great satisfaction for them, yet they started killing them for which they were punished, having been deprived of power.

In the wake of such misdeeds, some of which find mention in the

earlier part of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the divine law is that one who changes the blessings or clear signs of Allah, specially after it has come to him when he should have followed its guidance rather than turn back and go astray, then, the ultimate must come to pass, that is, Allah Almighty punishes such a deviant severely.

In the second verse (212), the real cause of the opposition to truth has been identified as the love of *dunyā* (the worldly life) and its material gains. One of the effects of this attitude shows up in the derogatory stance taken against those who love their faith. The reason is simple. When materialism overpowers, the urge for faith evaporates. In fact, people would go to the limit of abandoning their faith when it happens to be against their worldly interests and would even have the audacity to laugh at those who love and practice it. So, it should not be strange that many chiefs among the Israelites and the ignorant among polytheists would make fun of poor Muslims. It is in this context that the Holy Qur'ān says: 'Adorned is the present life for those who disbelieve' because of which 'they laugh at those who believe', although, these Muslims who have said no to *kufr* and *shirk* shall be in a state better than that of the disbelievers on the day of *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday), for the disbelievers will be in *Jahannam* (Hell) and the believers, in *Jannah* (Paradise).

The last sentence carries a warning for those who pride on their brute economic strength because it is Allah who 'gives, to whom He wills, without measure'. So, all this depends on divinely-ordained destiny and not on personal excellence or influence. As such, it is not necessary that one who is respected for personal possessions happens to be a recepient of honour with Allah as well. The truth is that real honour cannot be anything other than what turns out to be valid in the sight of Allah. That being that, would it not be a plain 'absence of sense' if one stands on the crutches of worldly riches and claims honour for himself and looks down upon the less fortunate as mean? The real consequence of such attitude shall be unravelled on the Last Day.

It has been reported that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'Anyone who takes a Muslim man or woman low in status because of his or her hunger, Allah Almighty will put him to disgrace before a gathering of

all, from the first to the last. And anyone who falsely accuses a Muslim man or woman of a weakness, Allah Almighty would put him on a high mound until he falsifies himself.' (al-Qurṭubī)

Verse 213

كَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ
وَاَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيْمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا
فِيْهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيْهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْبَيِّنٰتُ بَغْيًاۢ بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ
مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَاللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ O

All men used to be a single *Ummah*. Then Allah sent prophets carrying glad-tidings and warning and sent down with them the Book with the Truth to judge between people in what they disputed. And none but those to whom it (Book) was given disputed it after clear signs had come to them, led by envy against each other. Then Allah, by His will, guided those who believed, to the truth they disputed. And Allah guides whom He wills to the straight path. (Verse 213)

Earlier, the real cause of the opposition to truth has been identified as the love of the worldly life. Now, the present verses point out that, all along the lanes of time, Allah has been showing clear signs to establish the true faith, yet the seekers of the mundane benefits have been working against it to safeguard their material interests.

Commentary

Stated in the verse is the fact that there was a time when all human beings used to belong to one single community having common religion and belief - a faith, true and natural. Then came differences in temperaments and tastes, opinions and thoughts, consequently giving birth to contradicting beliefs, making it impossible to distinguish the true from the false. It was in order to make truth distinct from error and to show people the straight path of truth that Allah Almighty sent prophets with Books and revelations. After what the prophets عليهم السلام

did by way of moral education, people split apart in two groups. The first group welcomed the guidance sent by Allah Almighty and accepted to follow the prophets علیهم السلام . These are known as true Muslims. The second group belied the Scriptures and the prophets and refused to follow them. These are known as *kāfirs* or disbelievers. The opening statement in the verse كَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً translated as 'all men used to be a single *ummah*', needs some explanation. Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said in his *al-Mufradāt* that the word, *ummah* signifies a set of people gathered together for reasons of faith, time or place. This element of unicity could be that of beliefs and ideas, or that of presence in a geographical area at a given time, or that of heredity, language, colour and its likes. So, the sense of the statement is that there was a time when all human beings used to be a composite group. Two considerations emerge here which need elaboration:

Firstly, what sort of unity is stipulated in this verse? Secondly, what was the time when this unity existed? The first question was settled by the last sentence of this very verse which mentions the differences that came up later on, and that the prophets were sent to determine the true way out of the multiplicity of ways. It is obvious that the prophets and Scriptures sent to resolve these differences were not dealing with the differences in issues of heredity, language, colour, country or period. Instead, it was the difference of ideas and beliefs. This comparative examination tells us that the unity mentioned in this verse means the unity of ideas and the unity of beliefs.

So, as the sense of the verse appears now, there was a time when all human beings belonged to one set of beliefs. What was that set of beliefs? Two possibilities exist here. Either they were united under the belief of God's Oneness, or lived together under a state of disbelief and error. However, according to the majority of commentators, the weightier opinion is that all of them were united under the belief of God's Oneness. A verse to this effect appears in Sūrah Yūnus as well:

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ اِلَّآ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوْا وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ
بَيْنَهُمْ فِيْمَا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ O

All men used to be a single *ummah*. Then, they split. Had it not been the initial will of your Lord (that the true and false and the good and bad shall exist simultaneously in this mortal

world) all their disputes would have been settled once for all (leaving no trace of the enemies of truth). (10:19)

In Sūrah al-Anbiyā', it was said:

إِنَّ هٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ O

This *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, worship Me. (21:92)

Also in Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, it was said:

إِنَّ هٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوْنِ O

This *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, fear Me. (23:52)

All these verses indicate that the unity referred to here is the unity of belief and faith in the true religion.

Now, we have to determine the period of this universal human unity. The commentators of the Holy Qur'ān among the blessed Companions, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Ibn Zayd said that the period refers to the period of ' *'Azal'* (eternity without beginning) when the spirits of all human beings were created and asked أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ (Am I not your Lord?) to which every soul without exception said, 'Yes, You are our Lord'. That was the time when all human beings were on one true belief the name of which is Islam, the Faith. (Qurṭubī)

The blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said that the period of this unity of belief dates back to the time when Sayyidnā Ādam came into this world with his wife. They had children who multiplied. All of them believed in the religion of Ādam and followed his teachings, specially that of God's Oneness. All of them, except *Qābil* (Cain), were obedient to the religious law.

In the Musnad of al-Bazzār, there appears an addition to the statement of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās cited above which says that this unity of belief prevailed from the time of Sayyidna Adam to that of Sayyidnā Idrīs. Upto that time all of them followed Islam and *Tauhīd*, and the period in between them is that of ten *qarns*. Probably, *qarn* means a century which sets the period at one thousand years.

Some others have said that the period dates back to the time of the deluge in the days of Sayyidnā Nūḥ in which all living were swept

away except those who had boarded the ark with Sayyidnā Nūḥ. When the flood subsided, those who survived were all Muslims, monotheists and followers of the true faith.

In reality, all these three statements are not contradictory; all three periods were such that people were one community and followed the true faith.

The second sentence in the verse says:

فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ وَاَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيْمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ

> Then Allah sent prophets carrying glad-tidings and warning and sent down with them the Book with the Truth to judge between people in what they disputed.

It is worth noting that the first sentence said that all men used to be a single *ummah*, and in the second, this statement has been ramified by saying that Allah sent prophets and Books to resolve disputes. Obviously, the two sentences do not seem to synchronize because the cause of sending prophets and Books is the disputation of people, which did not exist at that time. However, the answer is very clear. The verse means that during the early period of human life, people adhered to one true faith, later on differences crept in, which led to disputations following which came the need to send prophets (عليهم السلام) and Books.

Something still remains. When mention has been made of a single *ummah* above, why is it that the incidence of differences has not been mentioned? Those who are blessed with some insight into the wisdom behind the style of the Holy Qur'ān would not find it difficult to answer the question, for the Holy Qur'ān, while relating past events, does not report the whole story anywhere, instead, it eliminates parts in between, which could be understood contextually. For instance, there is the prisoner in the story about Sayyidnā Yusūf عليه السلام who, after his release, came to the king and asked that he be sent to Sayyidnā Yusūf عليه السلام in order to seek an interpretation of the royal dream. This proposal of the prisoner is all that the Holy Qur'ān relates, then, the conversation begins with يُوْسُفُ اَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيْقُ. The text does not say that the king liked his proposal and sent him to the

prison-house to see Sayyidnā Yusūf عليه السلام and that he reached there, then, addressed him. The fact is that reading the text with sentences earlier and later makes all this simple to understand.

Similarly, the mention of differences after the mention of a united community in this verse was not considered necessary because the advent of disputes is something known by the whole world all the time. What needed to be expressed was that, before all these overflowing disputes, there was a time when all human beings used to follow one true religion. This is what was stated. Now, the disputes visible all over the world were not something that should have been expressly identified. This was unnecessary. Nevertheless, very pointedly it was said that Allah Almighty did provide for the removal of these disputes through guidance. The words of the text say: فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ that is, 'Allah Almighty sent prophets, عليهم السلام ' who were to carry glad-tidings of eternal peace and bliss to those who follow the true Faith and to give warning of the punishment of Hell to those who turn away from it. Then, Allah helped prophets through His revelations and Books which were to make truth distinct from error in matters of beliefs and ideas. The text, after that, points out to the outcome. Inspite of the prophets and Books with open truths, the world split itself into two groups. There were some who did not accept this clear guidance, and strangely enough, the first to deny this guidance were those to whom these prophets and verses were sent, that is, the Jews and the Christians. Far more astonishing is the fact that there was no possibility of any doubt or misgiving in Scriptures which were neither beyond their understanding nor were likely to throw them into confusion. In fact, these people knew and understood it, yet it was their lust for taking an opposite stand which made them deny it.

Then, there was the second group who were enabled to follow the straight path by Allah Almighty and they became the ones to say yes to the lead given by prophets, messengers and divine books sincerely and whole-heartedly. These very two groups have been identified in Sūrah al-Taghābun as follows:

خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ

Allah Almighty created you, then, some of you became disbelievers and some of you, believers. (64:2)

To sum up, the gist of the sense in the verse كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (All men used to be a single *ummah*) is that all human beings were initially and universally followers of the true faith. Then, temperamental multiplicity gave way to the promotion of self-interest which caused disputes to surface, so much so that a time came when beliefs too were disputed which in turn reached a point when the very root, the fine line of distinction between the true and the false, got all mixed up. Thereupon, Allah Almighty sent prophets عليهم السلام and His Books to guide people to the right path and to bring them back to the same true faith on which human beings already were. But, despite all guidance and very clear signs, there were some who dutifully followed these and there were others who, out of their obstinacy and hostility, took the road of denial and deviation.

Injunctions and related considerations

1. The verse tells us that Allah Almighty sent His prophets and Books into this mortal world for no other purpose but that people, who had left the single *ummah* following the true faith and branched out into different sects, should again be assembled into the same one community. Whenever people wavered from the right path, Allah sent a prophet, and a Book so that they act accordingly. The coming of prophets as a medium of reform and salvation continued when they again deviated which resulted in the coming of another prophet and another Book with the express purpose of putting people back on the right track, that is, on the straight path shown by their Lord. This is like health, a single fact of life as compared to diseases which are too many. When a certain disease showed up, Allah prescribed the appropriate medicine and regimen. Another disease brought another set of treatment.

Finally, came the most comprehensive of all prescriptions, one that will be ideally successful against all diseases until such time that Allah wills to keep this world going. This perfect prescription, a comprehensive blueprint of all diagnostic considerations, treatment par excellence, the most complete of all previous prescriptions which pre-empts all future possibilities of treatment, is none but that of Islam. For this came the last of the prophets ﷺ, and with him came the Qur'ān. There used to be the recurring problem of Scriptures being interpolat-

ed, prophetic teachings being lost which necessitated the sending of new prophets and new Books in the past. This was set right when Allah Almighty Himself took the responsibility of seeing that the Holy Qur'ān remains protected against interpolations or changes. Then, to make sure that the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān remain intact in their original form and live right through the Day of Doom, Allah Almighty promised to create and sustain a set of people from the community of Muḥammad ﷺ, a group which will always adhere to the true Faith, keep circulating the correct teachings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* among Muslims all over the world without ever flinching against any opposition or hostility. Therefore, after this, it was inevitable that the doors of prophethood and the coming of revelation be closed for ever. So, came the final proclamation, that of the end of prophethood.

Let there be no misgiving that during the course of history the coming of prophets and Books were ever a source of division or dissension between people. What is true, as stated earlier, is that all prophets and divine Books aimed at assembling people around one true faith to which they initially adhered.

2. We also discover here that the two-nation theory of Muslim and non-Muslim, the identification of nationhood on the basis of religion is exactly what the Qur'ān aims to support in فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ cited above. Along with it, we can also clearly see that the real foundation of the two-nation theory stands on raising a united nationhood, which flourished in the very beginning and which was based, not on the factor of the country of origin, but on believing in the Truth and following the straight path. The Qur'ānic statement: كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (All men used to be a single *ummah*) stresses that there used to be real national unity in the beginning of the world when people followed the true faith. Disputes came later. Then came the prophets who invited them to that real unity. Those who rejected their call cut themselves off from this united nationhood and were known as a separate nation.

3. The third lesson we learn from this verse is that evil people have always elected to oppose every prophet and every divine Book and have been even eager to line up their maximum forces against them.

This being the customary situation allowed to prevail by Allah Almighty, people who have the strength of faith in their hearts should not feel bad about the chronic pursuit of intrigues and hostility by the evil ones against them. Very simply, just as the disbelievers took to the ways of their elders in the form of denial, hostility and prophet-bashing, all true Muslims on the straight path should take to the consistent practice of their elders, the great prophets عليهم السلام , by staying patient against injuries inflicted on them, nevertheless, keep calling them to the true Faith with wisdom, sound advice and good grace. Perhaps, it is because of this congruity of purpose, that the next verse counsels Muslims to maintain a stance of forbearance and patience against all situations of distress.

Verse 214

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُم مَّثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن
قَبْلِكُم مَّسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ ٥

Do you think that you will enter Paradise despite that there have not yet come upon you circumstances as of those who have passed away before you? They were afflicted by hardship and suffering and were so shaken down that the prophet, and those who believed with him, began to say: "When the help of Allah (will come)"? Behold, the help of Allah is near. (Verse 214)

The previous verse has said how hostile the disbelievers have been to prophets and believers and, in a way, has comforted Muslims hurt by the mockery of disbelievers that there is nothing new about this antagonism. This has been there all the time. Further from this point, the present verse recounts the enormous amount of suffering faced by past prophets and believers at the hands of hostile disbelievers. This too is to console Muslims that they should be patient against the hostility of disbelievers as ideal happiness can only be achieved by getting ready and working hard for the Hereafter.

Commentary

There are two things worth serious attention in this verse:

1. Apparently, this verse seems to indicate that nobody shall enter Paradise unless he goes through hardships and sufferings, although, Qur'ānic statements and sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ prove that many sinners will enter Paradise simply because of the grace, mercy and forgiveness of Allah Almighty, and that they shall undergo no hardship either. This is because hardship and suffering have different levels. The lowest degree is to resist against one's own desiring self and the Satan, or to strengthen the bases of one's beliefs by countering the forces working against the true Faith. This degree of achievement is within the grasp of every Muslim. Further on, there are the middle and the higher levels. The degree of one's strenuous effort shall be the degree of one's entry in to Paradise. Thus, nobody remains untried by effort and struggle and the resulting hardship and suffering. In a *ḥadīth,* the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

اشد الناس بلاء الانبياء ثم الامثل فالامثل

> The hardships faced by the prophets are the hardest faced by men, after that, by those closer to them.

2. The second point one must note here concerns the prophets and their followers. That they reached a point of suffering when they cried out as to when will the help of Allah come, was not because of any doubt since that would be against the dignity of their station. In fact, the call was made in the background of Allah's promised help for which the time and place was left undetermined. As such, using these words in a state of distress indicated the desire for early help. Making such a prayer is not against one's trust in Allah (*tawakkul*) or against the station of prophethood. On the contrary, the fact is that Allah Almighty favours the earnest supplication of his servants. Who else other than the prophets and the pious of the community would be more deserving of what Allah likes?

Verse 215

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ قُلْ مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ
الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ
خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ○

They ask you as to what they should spend. Say:

> **"Whatever good you spend is for parents, kins, orphans, the needy and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, Allah is all-aware of that." (Verse 215)**

Commentary

Imperatives such as - 'leave disbelief and hypocrisy and enter Islam completely', 'listen to none when it comes to obeying the command of Allah', 'spend your wealth and give your life to seek the pleasure of Allah' and 'show fortitude against all sorts of hardships and sufferings' - have been emphatically mentioned in previous verses. Now, from this point onwards, there appear some details concerning this obedience which relate to one's wealth, life and other matters of marriage and divorce. All these form part of the general theme of righteousness which continues.

This statement of details is very special as these come in answer to questions raised by the noble Companions before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The answer to questions asked came directly from Allah through the medium of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If this were to be said in other words, one could say that the *Fatwā* (religious ruling) was given by Allah Almighty Himself. This too is correct because Allah Almighty has, in the Qur'ānic verse قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ :'Say: Allah answers you about them...' (4:127) attributed the act of giving *Fatwā* to Himself. Therefore, there is nothing strange about this attribution.

It is also possible to say that these *fatāwā* (plural of *fatwā*) come from the Holy Prophet ﷺ which have been communicated to him through revelation. Anyway, what has to be realized is that the religious injunctions described in this section as answers to some questions asked by the noble Companions carry a significance of their own. Throughout the Holy Qur'ān, such special injunctions in the form of questions and answers appear at nearly seventeen places. Seven out of these happen to be right here in the Sūrah al-Baqarah, one in Sūrah al-Mā'īdah and one in Sūrah al-Anfāl. These nine questions are from the noble Companions. Then come two questions in Sūrah al-A'rāf and one each in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, Sūrah al-Kahf, Sūrah Ṭā-Hā and Sūrah al-Nazi'āt making a total of six questions, which were asked by the disbelievers. All these have been answered in the Holy Qur'ān.

The blessed Companion and commentator of the Holy Qur'ān,

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās has said: 'I have not seen a set of people better than the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who, (despite their great attachment to matters of Faith and their deep love for and close relationship with the Holy Prophet ﷺ) asked very few questions.' The questions asked relate to a total of thirteen problems only, which have been answered in the Holy Qur'an because these noble souls never asked a question unless absolutely necessary (Qurtubi).

In the present verse (215), the *istiftā'* or questions asked by the noble Companions has been reported in the words, يَسْـَٔلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ : 'They ask you as to what they should spend'. The same question has been repeated in verse 219 in the same words: وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ but the answer to this one question has been given differently in the present verse (215) and later on, in verse 219.

Therefore, it is necessary to first understand the wisdom behind the two answers to one single question. This wisdom becomes clear by looking at the background in which these verses were revealed. For instance, the present verse was revealed in a particular situation when the Companion, 'Amr ibn Jamūh had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ the question: ماننفق من أموالنا وأين نضعها؟ (Ibn al-Mundhir - Maẓharī) that is, 'what do we spend from our wealth, and where?' According to a narration reported by Ibn Jarir, this question was not that of Ibn Jamuh alone, rather, it was from Muslims in general. The question has two parts, that is, what and how much should be spent, and where should it go or who should be the recepients.

Let us now look at the second verse (219) which begins with the same question. The background of its revelation as narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim is as follows. When the Holy Qur'ān commanded Muslims to spend in the way of Allah, some Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and requested an elaboration of the injunction. They wished to find out what 'money' or which 'thing' they should spend in the way of Allah. This question has one simple unit of inquiry, that is, what should they spend. Thus, the two questions somewhat differ in their approach. The first question consisted of the 'what' and 'where' of spending. The second question is restricted to 'what' only. The Qur'ānic answer to the first question shows that the second part of the question, that is, where should they spend, has been

given more importance and answered frontally and clearly. However, the first part of the question, that is, what should they spend, was answered as a corollary, and considered sufficient. Now let us go back to the two parts as they appear in the words of the Holy Qur'ān. About the first part, that is, where should they spend, it has been said:

مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ

Whatever good you spend is for parents, kins, orphans, the needy and the wayfarer.

Then, the other part of the question, that is, what should they spend, was answered as a corollary through the words, وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ : 'And whatever good you do, Allah is all-aware of that'. The hint is that Allah Almighty has not placed any restriction on you as to the amount of what you should spend. The fact is whatever you spend in accordance with your capability will become deserving of a matching reward with Allah.

In short, the considered explanation of the heads of expenditure was given in the first verse (215), perhaps, in view of the real concern of the questioner about where to spend. Then, the question, what should they spend, was answered as a corollary and considered sufficient. The later verse (219) where the question was limited to what 'money' or what 'thing' should they spend was answered by saying: قُلِ الْعَفْوَ (Say: "The surplus"). These two verses yield some rules of guidance about spending in the way of Allah.

Rulings

1. These two verses are not concerned with the obligatory *zakāh* because the threshold of holdings for the obligatory *Zakāh* is fixed, and the obligatory ratio of spending under it has also been fully determined through the Holy Prophet ﷺ . None of these two have been specified in the verses under discussion. This tells us that the two verses refer to voluntary charities (*al-Sadaqāt al-nāfilah*). This also removes the doubt about the inclusion of parents as recepients of spending under verse 215, although, giving *Zakāh* to parents is not permissible under the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The reason is simple. These two verses have nothing to do with the obligation of *Zakāh*.

2. Another rule of conduct which emerges from this verse is that even the gift given or food served to parents and other near of kin, if the intention is to obey Allah Almighty in doing so, will be included under spending in the way of Allah and will deserve reward with Him.

3. Consideration should be given, while making voluntary charities, to spending only what is extra to personal needs. Spending while hurting one's own family, over-riding their due rights and subjecting them to straightened circumstances is no act of merit. Similarly, one who does not pay back his debt yet goes on squandering money in voluntary charities is not liked in the sight of Allah.

The statement about spending 'the surplus' (*al-'afw*), that which is extra to needs, has been interpreted as an obligatory injunction by the blessed Companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and others. According to them, it is not permissible to hold in one's possession any money or materials surplus to needs even after paying of *zakāh* and fulfilling all rights due; it is necessary (*wājib*) to give everything extra to needs as charity (*ṣadaqah*). However, the majority of Companions, their successors (the Tābi'in) and the great *imams* of the Faith interpret the Qur'ānic verses in question to mean that whatever has to be spent in the way of Allah should be surplus to needs. It does not mean that one has to give in charity (*ṣadaqah*) everything surplus to need as something necessary or *wājib*. Moreover, this later position is what the consistent practice of the blessed Companions proves.

Verses 216 - 218

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا
وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ○ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ
فِيهِ ۖ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ ۖ وَصَدٌّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ
وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ
مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ إِنِ
اسْتَطَاعُوا ۚ وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ

النَّارِۚ هُمْ فِيهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا
وَجَاهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَةَ اللّٰهِؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ۝

Fighting is enjoined upon you, while it is hard on you. And it could be that you dislike something, when it is good for you, and it could be that you like something when it is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know. They ask you about the sacred month, that is, about fighting in it.

Say, "Fighting in it is something grave but, in the sight of Allah it is far more grave to prevent from the path of Allah, to disbelieve in Him, and *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, and to expel its people from there and *Fitnah* (to create disorder) is more grave than to kill." And they will go on fighting you until they turn you away from your faith if they could. And whoever of you turns away from his faith and dies infidel, then they are those whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter. And they are people of the Fire. They shall be there for ever.

As for those who believed and those who migrated and carried out *jihad* in the way of Allah, they do hope for Allah's mercy and Allah is Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (Verses 216-218)

Explanation in brief:

Verse 216 establishes the obligatory nature of *Jihād* even though it may be burdensome for some temperaments. In this case, the truth is that it is Allah Almighty who knows the reality of everything while man does not possess the full range of that knowledge. Therefore, one should not decide on things being good or bad as prompted by personal desires, rather, one must say yes to the command of Allah and follow it consistently as the most expedient course of action.

Verse 217 begins with a question which was asked by some disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh. It has been reported that some Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were by chance confronted by disbelievers while on a journey. During the engagement, one disbeliever got killed at their hands. The day this happened was the

first of the month of Rajab which, according to the calculation of the Companions, was the 30th of the *Jumādā al-Ukhirah*. It may be noted that Rajab is one of the 'sacred' months. So, the disbelievers taunted Muslims by saying that they did not even honour the sanctity of the 'sacred' month. The Muslims were worried and asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it. According to some narrations, as stated above, some disbelievers themselves came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and raised the question as a matter of objection.

The answer given is that 'fighting in a sacred month, is something grave' (but, Muslims did not do so intentionally, instead, this came to pass inadvertantly because of a misunderstanding about the date). Moreover, what the disbelievers have committed is more grave than this, because the disbelief, the placing of idols in the Holy Mosque and the expelling of Muslims from there is a greater evil than killing a disbeliever in a state of war.

Injunctions and related considerations

1. The injunction declaring *Jihād* as obligatory appears in the first of the three verses under comment in the words: كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ : "Fighting is enjoined upon you..." which means that '*Jihād* has been made obligatory on you'. These words apparently seem to say that *Jihād* is obligatory on every Muslim in every condition. Some other verses of the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, however, have clarified that this obligation is not absolute, that is, every Muslim is not charged to perform it as *Farḍ 'Ayn*, (absolute and mandatory obligation on every Muslim) instead, it is *Farḍ 'alā al-Kifāyah* whereby, should a group of Muslims come forward to discharge this obligation, other Muslims would be considered absolved from it. However, should there remain just no group ready to discharge the obligation of *Jihād* at any time or in any country, the result will be that all Muslims will fall into the sin of abandoning an obligation. The saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the *ḥadīth*: الجهاد ماض إلى يوم القيامة means that it is necessary that there be, right upto the Day of Doom, a group of Muslims which keeps discharging the obligation of *Jihād*. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān says:

فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ دَرَجَةً ۗ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى

> And Allah has given precedence to *mujāhidīn*, who carry out *jihād* with their properties and lives, over those who sit away, and Allah has promised good for both. (4:95)

Here, the promise of good has been extended to those also who may not be able to take part in *Jihād* because of some compulsive excuse or because of engagement in some other religious service. It is obvious that the promise of good would have never been made for those who are absent from *Jihād*, in the event that it were an absolute obligation on every individual Muslim. Similarly, this is what appears in another verse:

فَلَوْ لَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِي الدِّيْنِ

> Why could a small group from every large community of yours not come forward so that they pursue understanding in religion? (9:122)

Here, the Holy Qur'ān itself suggests a division of work whereby some Muslims carry out *Jihād* and some keep serving the cause of religious education. This can be done only when *Jihād* is *Fard 'alā al-Kifāyah* and not *Farḍ 'Ayn*.

In a *ḥadīth* appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, it is said that a person sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to take part in *Jihād*. He asked him: 'Are your parents alive?' He said, 'Yes, they are alive.' He said: 'Then, go. Serve your parents and earn the reward of *Jihād*'. Incidentally, this also tells that *Jihād* is a *Farḍ 'alā al-Kifāyah*. When a group from among the Muslims is staunchly discharging the obligation of *Jihād*, remaining Muslims can engage themselves in other services and duties. But, should there come a time when the 'Imām' or the leader of Muslims gives a general call under the compulsion of need and invites all Muslims to take part in *Jihād*, then, *Jihād* becomes an absolute obligation on everybody. In Sūrah al-Taubah, the Holy Qur'ān says:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ

> O those who believe, what has happened to you that, when you are asked to come out in the way of Allah, you become heavy? (9:38)

This verse carries the injunction relating to the general call of *Jihād* mentioned above. In the same way, should it be that

disbelievers, God forbid, invade an Islamic country and the group engaged in defence is not fully capable of it, being weak or insufficient in number, then, at that time as well, this obligation becomes 'contagious', passing on from that first group to all Muslims close by, as an equally effective obligation. And in case, they too are weak or incapable, the obligation will pass on to Muslims close to them. This situation may reach a point when *Jihād* becomes an absolute obligation on each and every individual Muslim all over the world. It is in view of these verses from the Holy Qur'ān that the majority of Muslim jurists and scholars of *ḥadith* have set up the rule that *Jihād* is *Farḍ 'alā al-Kifāyah* under normal conditions.

2. Therefore, as far as *Jihād* remains a *Farḍ Kifāyah*, it is not permissible for the off-spring to go for *Jihād* without the permission of their parents.

3. It is not correct for one who has a debt to pay to take part in this *Farḍ Kifāyah* until such time that he clears his debt off. But, should there come a time when, either due to a general call for *Jihād* or an aggressive encirclement of Muslims by the disbelievers, *Jihād* becomes *Farḍ 'Ayn*, an absolute obligation on all, then, no condition such as that of the permission of parents or of the husband or of the creditor remains operative. Towards the end of this verse, it is as a mode of persuasion that *Jihād* has been identified as something which may, temperamentally, appear 'hard' but one must remember that human intelligence and effort fails so many times when it comes to the outcome. It is not at all surprising that the most intelligent person around may take the beneficial to be harmful and vice versa. If everyone was to look back into the events of his or her life, it will be noticed right there that there was something they were going after as beneficial turned out ultimately to be very harmful, or there was something they were avoiding as harmful which later on proved to be very beneficial. This scenario of human reasoning and planning failing time and again is a matter of repeated experience, therefore, it was said that fighting in the way of Allah may obviously appear to be a loss of life and property, yet the time will come when realities will be unveiled and we shall find out that this loss was no loss, instead, it was the ultimate in gain, and a source of eternal peace.

The injunction relating to fighting in the 'sacred' months:

The second of the three verses under comment here proves that fighting is forbidden in Rajab, Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah and Muharram, the four 'sacred' months. In the same way, there are several verses of the Holy Qur'ān where fighting has been very clearly forbidden during the sacred months, for instance: مِنْهَآ أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ :'Four of them are sacred. That is the right religion' (96:36). Then there is the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the famous address of the Last Ḥajj: منها أربعة حرم ثلاث متواليات ورجب مضر: 'Four (months) from among them are sacred, out of which three are consecutive and the (fourth) is Rajab of *Muḍar*'. These Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth* narrations prove that fighting is *ḥaram* in the four months mentioned and this forbiddance is good for ever.

In this connection, 'Atā ibn Abī Rabāḥ, a leading early exponent of Qur'anic exegesis declared on oath that this injunction is there to stay for ever. Several others among the respected Successors (*Tabi'īn*) regard this injunction as provenly unabrogated, but in accordance with the ruling of the majority of Muslim jurists as stated by al-Jaṣṣāṣ,this injunction is one of the abrogated ones as maintained by a consensus of jurists and fighting is no more forbidden in any month.

Now comes the question as to which verse of the Holy Qur'ān abrogates this injunction. Jurists have taken different positions in this respect. Some say the verse قَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ كَآفَّةً :'And fight the disbelievers, all of them' (9:36) abrogates it. Many others regard the verse فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ :'Slay the disbelievers wherever you find them' (9:5) as its abrogator. They have taken the word: حَيْثُ here in the sense of 'anytime' meaning thereby that the disbelievers should be killed in whatever month or time they are found. Some have said that the abrogator of this injunction is the very conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ since he himself besieged the city of Ta'if during the 'sacred months' and it was during the 'sacred months' that he sent the noble Companion 'Āmir al-Ash'arī on the military expedition of *Awṭās*. On these grounds, Jurists in general, regard this injunction as abrogated, al-Jaṣṣāṣ calls it وهو قول فقهاء الأمصار : 'This is what the majority of the jurists says'.

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, under comments on this verse, and al-Baydāwī, under the explanation of the first section of Sūrah al-Barā'ah have

reported a consensus of the community on the abrogation of the forbiddance of fighting during the 'sacred months' (Bayān al-Qur'ān). However, al-Tafsīr al-Mazharī answers all these arguments by saying that the sanctity of the 'sacred months' is clearly present in the verse known as *Āyah al-sayf* or the Verse of the Sword, that is :

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِندَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ

'The number of months, with God, is twelve (mentioned) in the book of Allah, the day that he created the heavens and the earth; four of them are sacred' (9:36).

Of the verse relating to fighting, this verse was the last one to be revealed and the Address of the Last Ḥajj which was delivered only 80 days before the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed away clearly indicates the sanctity of the 'sacred months'. For this reason, the verses quoted cannot be regarded as abrogative of this injunction. Moreover, the siege of Ṭā'if did not take place in the month of Dhul-Qa'dah. It was in Shawwāl, therefore, this too cannot be regarded as its abrogator. But, it can certainly be conceded that the absolute forbiddance of fighting in the 'sacred months' which seems to reflect from the verse referred to holds an exception whereby it would become permissible for Muslims to defend themselves, or counter attack the aggressor if disbelievers themselves start the fighting during these months. This much, then, can be termed as abrogated, which finds a clarification in the verse اَلشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ : 'The holy month for the holy month' (2:194).

The gist of the discussion is that initiating a fight during these months is forbidden for ever, but in the event that disbelievers mount an attack on Muslims, then, Muslims are permitted to fight back in their defence. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has reported the narration of the blessed Companion Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh who said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not fight in any of the 'sacred months' until such time that the initial fighting was started by the disbelievers.

The evil consequences of Apostasy

Towards the end of the verse (217), it has been said that the act of turning into an apostate after having become a Muslim shall be dealt with under the injunction حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ: that is, they shall be those whose deeds have gone waste in this world and in the Hereafter.

Here are some injunctions relating to the apostates:

1. Some examples of 'deeds going waste in this world' are that the wife of an apostate goes out of the bond of marriage; if a relative of an apostate dies a Muslim, he gets no share in the inheritance; all obligations such as prayers and fasting fulfilled in one's state of Islam are reduced to nothing; for such a person funeral prayers are not offered and he or she is not buried in the graveyard meant for Muslims.

'Deeds going waste in the Hereafter' means that one gets no reward for acts of worship and enters the Hell to stay there for ever.

2. Should an apostate become a Muslim once again, at least this much is certain that he could hope to salvage himself away from Hell in the Hereafter, while during the remaining tenure of his life in the mortal world, the injunctions of Islam will be operative for him. But, there is a difference of opinion among jurists about what would happen to a person who has already done his Hajj - would it be obligatory on him, given the capability, to do it all over again, or would it not? Similarly, in the Hereafter, would the reward for his previous religious performances, such as prayers and fasting, revert back to him, or would they not? Imām Abū Ḥanīfah says that it is obligatory on him to do his Ḥajj again and he does not subscribe to the opinion that he will be rewarded for his previous prayers and fastings while Imām Shāfiʿī differs on both issues.

3. For one who is basically a disbeliever, the position is that the reward for his good deeds in a state of disbelief is held in abeyance. If there comes the time when he embraces Islam, he gets a matching reward for all such deeds, but in the event that he dies an infidel, everything goes waste. The *Ḥadīth* statement: أسلمت على ماأسلفت من خير : 'You have embraced Islam with all the good deeds which you have performed earlier' means just this.

4. In short, the fate of an apostate is worse than that of an original disbeliever. This is why *Jizyah* can be accepted from an original disbeliever while a male apostate who does not return to Islam is killed. If the apostate is a woman, she is imprisoned for life. The reason is that their conduct insults Islam and the insult of such a binding authority deserves no less a punishment.

Verse 219

يَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيْهِمَآ اِثْمٌ كَبِيْرٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ
لِلنَّاسِ وَاِثْمُهُمَآ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا

They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, "In both there is great sin, and some benefits for people. And their sin is greater than their benefit. (Verse 219)

Commentary:

This verse forms part of the series of questions asked by the noble Companions. These are as they appear in this Surah along with the answers given. Here, the question is about wine and gambling which has been answered by Allah Almighty by pointing out that the use and practice of these two things breeds major sins while people may also get some benefits from them, but the sin they release is far too grave than the benefit they give, implying that both these are worth abandoning.

Since these two issues are very serious, they need a somewhat detailed inquiry into their nature and the injunctions relating to them.

The prohibition of wine, and related injunctions:

When Islam came, drinking was common practice as part of the general state of *Jāhilī* customs. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ emigrated to Madīnah, people of that city were also accustomed to wine and gambling. Common people were infatuated with these in view of their obvious benefits. They had no idea of the evils inherent in these practices. However, it is the usual practice of Allah that there are, in every nation and in every country, sensible people who use reason to control their temperaments. They would not go near an emotional urge if it goes against the dictates of reason. In this regard, the station of the noble Prophet ﷺ was way high, for he had a built-in distaste for things which were going to be declared *ḥaram* later on. Even among the blessed Companions there were some who had not touched wine during the days it was an open practice. It was after reaching Madīnah al-Tayyibah that some Companions became deeply concerned about the evil effects of these two involvements. It was due to this concern that Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq and Mu'ādh ibn Jabal along with some Anṣārī Companions presented themselves before the Holy

Prophet ﷺ and told him how wine and gambling not only spoil man's reason but also cause financial loss and sought his advice in this connection. It was in answer to their question that the present verse was revealed. This is the first verse in which the elementary step to stop Muslim from wine and gambling was taken.

What the verse says is clear from its translation, and its explanation which follows immediately. It may be added here that the word, *'Ithm'* or sin includes everything that may become a preliminary to sin. For instance, wine dulls senses and weakens the power of reason, something basic to human excellence. Human reason acts as a brake against human indulgence in evil deeds. Once reason is blocked out, the door is opened for all sorts of evil deeds.

It will be noted that drinking has not been clearly identified as something unlawful in this verse, but its evils has certainly been pointed out, which may lead man into many sinful activities. In a way, this takes the form of a good counsel urging man to abandon it. That is why, soon after the revelation of this verse, some noble Companions took this good counsel of the Holy Qur'ān so seriously that they stopped drinking then and there. There were some others among them who thought that the verse, in fact, has not declared wine as *ḥaram*; it has, instead, identified it as a cause of sin in as much as it does lead to evils religiously undesirable, so, if they can manage to keep themselves immune from such evils, what harm could there be if they continued drinking? Consequently, so they did, until came a day when the blessed Companion, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf رضی اللہ عنہ invited some of his friends from among the noble Companions at his home. When dinner was over, everybody started drinking wine as usual. In the meantime, came the time for *Maghrib ṣalāh*. Everybody stood up for *salah* and selected one of them to lead the prayers. The Imam began his recitation from the Holy Qur'ān, but drunk as he was, he recited the Sūrah al-Kāfirūn all wrong. Thereupon, the second step against drinking was taken and the following verse was revealed:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَى

O those who believe, do not go near *Ṣalāh* when you are intoxicated. (4:43)

Here, drinking was declared to be absolutely unlawful at the time

of the *Ṣalāh*. Other times remained open. Some of the noble Companions had totally stopped drinking following the revelation of the first verse deducing from it that something which stops one from *Ṣalāh* cannot hold any good at all. And now that *Ṣalāh* has been prohibited in a state of intoxication, one should keep his distance from that which deprives one from *Ṣalāh*. However, since wine was not forbidden clearly and explicity during hours other than those of *Ṣalāh*, there were some who continued drinking during other hours until when there occured yet another incident. This time it was the blessed Companion, ‘Itbān ibn Mālik who invited some Companions, Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ being one of them. Once the dinner was over, wine was served in accordance with the custom. Then, turning to another customary Arab practice at that time, the intoxicated party started talking poetry and began reciting their respective accomplishments and excellences. The Companion Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ recited a *Qaṣīdah*[49] poem in which he satirized the Ansār (helpers) of Madīnah and eulogized his own tribal affinities. This made an Ansāri youngman angry and he hit Sa‘d with a jaw-bone from a camel causing severe injury on his head. Sayyidnā Sa‘d came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and complained against that Ansāri youngman. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ raised his hands in prayer and said: اللهم بين لنا فى الخمر بيانا شافيا, that is, 'O Allah, give us a clear and conclusive guidance in the matter of wine'. Thereupon, the third verse regarding wine, that of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, was revealed with details declaring wine to be absolutely unlawful. The verse is as follows:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَ الْمَيْسِرُ وَالْاَنْصَابُ وَالْاَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ
الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝

O you who believe! wine and gambling and stone altars and drawing of lots with arrows are only an abomination, a work of Satan; so shun it, that haply you may prosper. (5:90)

The gradual forbiddance of wine

Being supreme in His authority, Allah alone knows the real wisdom behind all divine imperatives, but a close look into the Islamic legal code reveals that the Sharī‘ah of Islam has left ample room for

49. An Arab poetical form introduced by the modern poet, Garcia Lorca in the West.

human emotions when following its dictates. This is to give man the least possible inconvenience. The Holy Qur'ān has itself said: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا :'Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his or her capacity' (2:286). It was the demand of this mercy and wisdom that made Islam go slow on forbidding wine.

The gist of the Qur'ānic history of forbidding wine through a gradual process is that it has revealed four verses on the subject. As said earlier, one of these verses belongs to Sūrah al-Baqarah, the explanation of which you are reading through now. Here, wine has been identified as sin-prone, a corrupting agent. The mention of wine has been left at that point. It has not been 'forbidden'. This, in a way, is a manner of saying that the habit of drinking is worth leaving, but the direct command to quit drinking was not given.

The second verse لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْتُمْ سُكٰرٰى :'do not go near *ṣalāh* when you are intoxicated' (4:43) appears in Sūrah al-Nisā'. Here, wine was declared to be unlawful during *ṣalāh* hours. At other times, the choice remained open.

The third and the fourth verses belong to Sūrah al-Mā'idah. In these two, as mentioned earlier, wine was declared to be unlawful clearly and absolutely.

The Sharī'ah of Islam used the method of gradual prohibition of wine for the simple reason that it would have been much too hard on human temperament to cut away from the habit of a life-time, specially so the habit of addiction to intoxicants. Scholars have said: فطام العادة أشد من فطام الرضاعة : that is, it is harder to change an ongoing habit for man than it is for a child used to suckling at his mother's breast. So, moving wisely, Islam first stressed on its evil, then prohibited it only at the time of *ṣalāh* and finally after the passage of a certain time, it was absolutely forbidden.

However, the wisdom that required a gradual process before the prohibition had equally required that once the prohibition is promulgated, it should be implemented with its full force. That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ , in the early stages, warned people against the use of wine and told them how it invited divine punishment. He said that wine was the source of evils and indecencies and one who indulges in it can go on to commit even the worst possible sins.

In a *hadith*, he said 'Wine and Faith cannot be combined.' These narrations appear in al-Nasā'ī. In the Jāmi' of al-Tirmidhī, there is a narration from the blessed Companion Anas which reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has cursed ten people in relation to wine, being the crusher or presser or squeezer, the distiller, the user, the server, the carrier, the receiver (the one for whom it is carried), the seller, the buyer, the giver (as gift), and the one who uses the income arising from it. This verbal teaching and persuasion was not all that he stopped at, he took practical steps and made a legally binding proclamation that whosoever has any wine in possession should deposit it at an appointed place.

The matchless obedience of the blessed Companions

As soon as the first order came to them, the noble Companions, obedient and responsive as they were, lost no time and took out all wine stored in their homes for personal use and poured it out on the streets then and there. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, رضى الله عنه has reported that at the time when the proclaimer appointed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ went around the streets of Madīnah announcing that wine was forbidden, whoever had a vessel of wine in his hands, threw it away right where he was and whoever had cups or goblets or flasks of wine in the house, brought these out and smashed them off. Sayyidna Anas was happily busy serving wine to a gathering of friends at that time. Present there were great Companions like Abū Ṭalḥa, Abū 'Ubaydah ibn Jarrāh, Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b and Suhayl رضى الله تعالى عنهم اجمعين . When the voice of the proclaimer struck their ears, everybody present said, 'Now, pour all this wine down on the ground and break all cups and goblets and ewers and pitchers.' In some narrations it is said that it was immediately with the announcement that wine had become unlawful that everyone who had a cup of wine reaching close to his lips was electrified and threw it away right there. That day, wine was flowing down the streets of Madīnah like a stream of rainwater, and as a result of that, it remained usual in the streets of Madīnah for a long time that rains would reactivate the smell of wine soaked in the ground, as well as its colour, which would show up on the surface.

When people were ordered to deposit whatever wine they had at a given place, not much was left there to deposit except the limited stock

of wine casks and bags, available in the market for commercial sales. So obedient were the noble Companions that they deposited those too at the designated place without the least hesitation. The Holy Prophet ﷺ went there personally and slit many leather wine-bags with his own blessed hands and let the rest be slit apart by other Companions.

Another Companion, a businessman who imported wine from Syria happened to be on a business trip in Syria. He had taken his entire capital with him against which he bought a stock of wine for commercial sales. When he returned with his cargo, he came to know that wine had been declared *ḥaram* before he could enter the city limits of Madīnah. Having heard about the ban on wine, the Companion who was a model of devotion and sacrifice, and who was also returning home after investing all his capital and labour hoping to make a big profit out of it, quietly stacked it on a wayside hillock, came down to see the Holy Prophet ﷺ asking him about this stock of his: 'What should I do?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ ordered him, in accordance with the Divine command, that he should tear out all those leather bags and pour the wine in them down on the ground. This wonderful lover of Allah and His Messenger did not hesitate for a moment. Using his own hands, he poured forth all his invested capital on the sands of that hill-slope. This too is a great miracle of Islam, and a demonstration of mind-boggling and virtually unrivalled obedience that came about during this episode. Imagine how difficult it is to shake off the habit of being used to something while these people were chronically habituated to consuming wine and could not stay away from it even for a little while. For them, it was just that command from their Lord proclaimed by His prophet which brought about such an instant change in their habits that they started hating the same wine and gambling they were so addicted to.

Islamic strategy for a social change

The verses above and the events connected with them present before us a model of active Muslim response to the law making wine unlawful. One may call it a miracle of Islam or a unique outcome of prophetic teaching and training or the inevitable end-product of Islamic methodology of social change, the fact is that its effectiveness was phenomenal. Compared to this was the attempt at prohibition made in the United States with the support of experts, lobbies, law,

media and constitutional amendment which failed in the face of much increased use of liquor making the authorities cancel their plans. What is the secret behind this enormous difference?

The secret is that Islam has never depended on law alone as the tool of social reform. Law not being sufficient, it has first prepared and fine-tuned the minds of its people tempering their attitudes with the golden prescription of a deep devotion to and worship of their Creator, moderation in worldly living and a genuine concern for the life to come. The great revolution brought in this manner produced matchless men who would eagerly come forward to sacrifice their life, property, honour, anything and everything at one call from their prophet. This task of preparing men who would match the mission continued throughout the Makkan period by means of rigorous spiritual training. Once such a devoted group of people was ready, then came the law. No doubt, the Americans too did their best utilizing the vast powers of the media, but they had everything with them except the concern for the life to come while the concern for the Hereafter was the very life-blood of Muslims.

The golden prescription is still there, very much valid, waiting for peaceless people round the world to use it. Let the wise think.

The good and evil of wine

The 'good' in wine is popularly known as a certain taste and a feeling of well-being, professed increase of temporary energy, and a given glow on the face. Being transient, these benefits hardly stand against the array of evils it breeds. Take the human body first. Drinking causes mal-function of the stomach, reduces desire to eat, affects facial contours, inflates the waistline, hurts the liver and the kidneys and becomes a contributor to all sorts of diseases. Reason does not work under the influence of hard drinks which goes beyond the time one claims to have become sober. The hangover turns out to be as bad. Wine, a tempting stimulant and a much romanticized poison works slowly, inspite of the spirited defence put up by its users. The fact is that drinking not only harms them but affects their children as well.

Socially, drinking may become the cause of mutual malice and enmity which is a great evil in the sight of Islamic law. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān particularly mentions this evil in Sūrah al-Mā'idah:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ أَنْ يُّوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ

The Satan only wants that hositility and hatred come to stay between you through wine and gambling. (5:91)

One of the most harmful drawbacks of drinking shows up when a person under its influence lets out his guarded secrets. It becomes much more disasterous if the culprit happens to be a state functionary in possession of vital government secrets. Passing these out to an enemy agent can cause great damage to the state through a coup, a political loss or a challenge to national defence. Clever spies are always on the look out for such opportunities.

So, the habit of drinking is not only an evil in itself but a mother of other evils as well making men ready to commit the worst possible crimes against their fellow-beings.

The physical evils of drinking are too well-known to recount here while its spiritual evils are equally obvious. Wine is harmful because the Holy Qur'ān says: وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ : 'It prevents you from remembering Allah and from the *Ṣalāh*'. Then, the question asked by the Holy Qur'ān is: 'Would you then desist?'

The forbiddance of wine: A complete view

Upto this point, we have discussed four verses of the Holy Qur'ān which deal with the unlawfulness of wine, and its forbiddance. It seems appropriate that yet another mention of intoxicants made by the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah Al-Nāḥl in a different context should be brought into focus here so that we have all Qur'ānic statements concerning wine and intoxicants in one complete frame of reference. The said verse is as follows:

وَمِنْ ثَمَرٰتِ النَّخِيْلِ وَ الْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَّرِزْقًا حَسَنًا إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ۝

And of the fruits of the palms and the vines, you take therefrom an intoxicant and a good provision. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who understand. (16:67)

In verses preceding the one above, mention was made of Allah's blessings which cause production of human food through unique mechanisms. It was said:

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِى الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً نُّسْقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِى بُطُونِهِ مِنۢ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَّبَنًا
خَالِصًا سَآئِغًا لِّلشَّٰرِبِينَ ۝

And surely in the cattle there is a lesson for you; We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, between filth and blood, pure milk, sweet to drinkers. (16:66)

The text uses the word, '*nusqikum*' which means 'We gave you milk to drink' implying that it needs no further human processing. Following this, it was said that man procures things to eat, as well as, makes things which benefit him. Here, the hint is that human processing plays some part in procuring what he eats and in making what he uses to his advantage. And it is as a result of the entry of the human factor that two types of things were produced. One of these is an intoxicant known as wine while the other is 'a good provision', such as the dates and the grapes which can be used fresh off the palms and vines or can be dried and stored for later use. In short, Allah Almighty, in His perfect creativity, gave man fruits such as dates and grapes and gave him the added right to use them as food. Now what he makes out of them is his choice, either make intoxicants out of them and thereby spoil his reason, or use them for food and energy. According to this explanation, this verse cannot be used to argue in support of the lawfulness of intoxicating wine. The reason is simple. Here, the purpose is to describe the gifts of nature and to point out to the different forms in which they could be used which is all part of the same Divine blessing. For instance, consider all that man eats and things man uses to his advantage. There are many who use these in ways that are impermissible but, the incidence of someone using things wrongfully does not preclude a blessing from remaining a blessing. So, the context of the statement needs no details as to which use is permissible or impermissibe, however, there is a subtle indication embedded here too. If we look at how '*sakar:* intoxicant' has been counter-poised by '*rizqan ḥasana*': 'a good provision', we would realize that an intoxicant is not a good provision. The majority of commentators take *sakar* to mean something that intoxicates. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, Qurṭubī and Jaṣṣāṣ)

There is a consensus of the *Ummah* that these verses are Makkan while the unlawfulness of wine was revealed later on in Madīnah

al-Tayyibah. Even though wine was lawful at the time these verses were revealed and Muslims used to indulge in wine generally yet, even at that stage, a hint was made in the verse that indulging in wine is not good. Later on, came the Qur'ānic command which clearly and forcefully made wine unlawful.

The prohibition of Gambling

The word, *maisir* is an infinitive and lexically means 'to distribute'. One who distributes is called *yāsir*. During the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, several types of games of chance were common in Arabia. In one of such games, they used to slaughter a camel following which they would gamble while distributing shares from the meat. Some used to get more than one share while others remained deprived of even one. The one who thus remained deprived had to pay for the whole camel. The meat was, of course, distributed among the poor; the gamblers did not use it themselves.

The catch in this particular game of chance was that it benefited the poor while, at the same time, it demonstrated the philanthropy of the gamblers. That is why this game was considered a matter of pride by them. Anyone who would not participate in it was chided as miserly and wretched.

It is because of the relevance of distribution that *Qimar* is given the name of *Maisir*. All Companions, and Successors to them, hold the unanimous view that the word, *Maisir* includes all forms of *Qimār* or gambling and that all of them are *ḥaram* or unlawful. Ibn Kathīr in his Tafsīr and al-Jassās in Aḥkam al-Qur'ān report that the blessed Companions 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, Qatadah, Mu'awiyah ibn Ṣāliḥ, 'Atā and Tā'wūs said: ألميسر القمار حتى لعب الصبيان بالكعاب والجوز that is, *Qimār* (of all kinds) is *Maisir* - even the games of children with dices and walnuts.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said: ألمخاطرة من القمار that is, *Mukhāṭarah* (to put something on stake) falls under Qimār (Jaṣṣāṣ). Ibn Sirin said: 'That which involves stakes is included in *Maisir*' (Rūḥ al-Bayān).

Mukhāṭarah or 'stake' is a deal which revolves between profit and loss, that is, there may be a chance that one gets a lot, and also, that one gets nothing. This is very much like what we find in all sorts of modern lotteries. All these types are included under *Qimār* and *Maisir*

or gambling, and are *ḥaram*. Therefore, *Maisir* or *Qimār* or gambling has been defined as a deal in which the act of making a person the owner of something of value depends on a contingency the two sides of which are equal, and consequently, there are two equal possibilities of taking total profit or absorbing total loss (Shāmi, Kitab al-Khatar wa l'ibahah, volume 5, page 355). For instance, it is quite possible that the penalty falls on A, and it is also possible that it falls on B.

To sum up, the rule is that all kinds and forms in vogue - in the past or current today or likely to emerge in the future - shall all be called *Maisir* and *Qimār* and gambling. Prize-awarding cross-word puzzles (in which the participants are charged a fee) and commercial lotteries, the generally known among whatever other forms they may have, are all included under gambling. However, should there be a prize offered by one side only, stipulating that it will be given to one who performs a certain feat, that would not matter subject to the condition that no fee is taken from that person. The reason is that, in this case, the deal does not hang between benefit and harm, but hangs between benefit and no-benefit.

Therefore, in authentic *aḥādīth*, chess and backgammon and their likes have been declared unlawful where money or property is staked in a win or lose situation. Should there be money staked in playing cards, that too will be included under *Maisir*.

In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, there is a report from the blessed Companion Buraydah رضی اللہ عنہ which states that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that one who plays backgammon is like one who dyes his hands in the flesh and blood of pork. Sayyidnā 'Alī کرم اللہ وجہہ said that chess is included in *Maisir*, that is, gambling. Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said that chess is much worse than backgammon. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

During the early days of Islam, gambling was permissible like drinking. When the verses beginning "غُلِبَتِ الرُّوْمُ" in Sūrah al-Rūm were revealed where the Holy Qur'ān foretold that the Byzantines have no doubt lost to their rivals - the Persians, but, after a few years, the Byzantines will prevail once again. When the disbelievers of Makkah denied the prophecy, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr al-Siddīq رضی اللہ عنہ challenged them with a bet, something like *Qimār*, proposing that should the Byzantines prevail in so many years the disbelievers will have to pay a

certain amount. The bet was approved. When this prophecy of the Qur'ān actually came to pass, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr made sure that he got the waged amount from the disbelievers and brought it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who expressed his pleasure with what had happened but asked him to give away the bet-money in charity. This is significant because Allah had kept His Messenger ﷺ protected from something that was permissible at that time but was going to be made impermissible later on. This is why he always kept aloof from wine and gambling, and there were particular ones among the noble Companions who also remained protected against these. It appears in a narration that the angel Jibra'il told the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Allah Almighty likes four character-traits in Ja'far al-Tayyar. He asked Sayyidnā Ja'far al-Ṭayyār as to what these four traits were. He said, 'Till now, I have never talked about these before anyone. Now that Allah Almighty has told you about them, I submit and relate these four to you. I saw that wine ruins reason, so I never went near it. I saw that idols cause no benefit or harm to anyone, so I never indulged in idol-worship even during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*. Since I have an acute sense of honour concerning my wife and daughters, so I never committed adultery. Then, I realized that lying is unbridled meanness, and a terrible disgrace, so I never told a lie even in *Jāhiliyyah*'. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

Social ill-effects of gambling

The Holy Qur'ān has said the same thing about *Qimār* or gambling as it has said about wine, that is, in it, there are some benefits as well, but the harm it brings is greater than its benefits. Everyone knows this sort of benefit can make a pauper an overnight millionaire, but there are very few people who know how evil the practice is economically, socially and spiritually.

In gambling, speaking briefly, the gain of one person is dependent upon the loss of the other. The total gain of the winner is an outcome of the total loss of the loser because this transaction does not increase the (national) wealth or production. The amount of wealth remains as it was. What happens through this game of chance is that one is sucked dry of his wealth which then reaches the other, therefore, *Qimār* is a blanket undoing of a people, and the death of human morality. Isn't it that man, who should be an agent of public good, a

model of sympathy and sacrifice, stoops to the level of a beast while gambling, and starts seeing his life in the death of his brother, and finding delight in his distress, and searching for gain in his loss, and goes about harnessing all his abilities to promote his selfishness? Contrary to this are the permissible forms of transactions in trade where parties buy and sell releasing profits for both. Then, wealth circulates and increases through exchange of commercial commodities and the buyer and seller both find it beneficial.

To begin with, gambling is harmful because the addicted gambler comes to be deprived of the very habit of earning his livelihood, because he always keeps dreaming that he will simply sit and grab what belongs to the other person in no time through a bet, specially so as it involves no hard work. Some scholars have said that gambling has been called *Maisir* (as derived from the word '*yusr*' meaning 'easiness') because one can easily take possession of what belongs to the other through it. Even if gambling deals revolve around a small number of people such as two or four, their harmful effects mentioned above show up very clearly. But, here we are in this modern age, called 'the age of progress' by those handicapped by superficial vision and lack of insight into its aftermath, where we see wine of all sorts given new names and labels, where ever-new kinds of interest and ever-innovative corporate methods to promote it have been invented, commandeered and given the safe name of 'banking'; so it is with gambling where thousands of dubious forms have found currency. Some of these are so highly collective that the amount of contribution from a whole nation keeps adding up bit by bit, and in case there is a loss, that gets spread out over everybody and thus does not become conspicuous. When an amount from this total 'take' reaches the hands of one person, his gain appears to be prominent, therefore, people tend to look at his personal gain but pay no heed to the collective loss of their nation or country. Consequently, they are trapped into believing that these new kinds may as well be valid, although present here are all those harmful effects which are found in gambling confined to a small group of two or four people. Looked at from another angle, the harm brought by this large-scale gambling is much worse than that released by the older form of gambling, for its evil effects are far-reaching and spell out the ruin of a whole nation. As evident, the natural result of this practice will be that wealth belonging to the common people of the community will go on decreasing while the

capital of some capitalists will go on increasing further. Inevitably then, the entire wealth of the nation will shrink and come to be concentrated into the hands of a limited number of individuals and a limited number of families. This can be witnessed everyday in stock markets and in other forms of *Qimār*. Now, Islamic economic strategy has an important principle of its own. It declares that every deal which siphons the wealth of a whole community out into the coffers of a few capitalists is *ḥaram*, unlawful and forbidden. The Holy Qur'ān itself, while stating the principle of the distribution of wealth, has proclaimed: كَيْلَا يَكُوْنَ دُوْلَةًۢ بَيْنَ الْاَغْنِيَاۤءِ مِنْكُمْ . It means that the principle of distributing spoils of war among different segments of the society given by the Holy Qur'ān aims to make sure that wealth does not shrink and concentrate in the hands of a few capitalists.

Gambling, like wine, becomes the cause of mutual disputes reaching the limits of hatred and animosity, so fatal in a civilized society. To quote once again, the Holy Qur'ān mentions the evil of gambling in the following words:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِى الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ

The Satan only wants hostility and hatred to come to stay between you through wine and gambling, and to prevent you from remembering Allah and from the *Ṣalāh*. (5:91)

The effect of gambling, like that of wine, is that one gets recklessly involved in it, becoming unable to attend to the remembrance of Allah, and the prayer. Perhaps, this is why the Holy Qur'ān has elected to mention wine and gambling side by side in an identical manner since *Qimār* or gambling has an intoxicating pull of its own which makes one ignore the concern of what is good or bad for him.

As partly mentioned earlier, the basic evil in gambling is that one can falsely devour what belongs to others through this method without any reasonable compensation or brotherly consideration. This is what the Holy Qur'ān prohibits in the following words: لَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ : (And do not eat up each other's property by false means) (2:188).

The destroyer of many a home, the ill effects of gambling do not remain restricted to the gambler alone. They affect his whole family and become contagious to a much larger social circle because people may have entered into transactions, contracts and loan deals with him which will hurt all concerned in the event of his becoming insolvent.

Finally, in the background of rising social addiction to various *Qimār* forms, it is useful to keep in view that this evil distorts one's natural attitude to work and rivets it on imagined gains. Rather than concentrate on his physical or mental skills to increase his earnings steadily, one starts getting fixed on finding ways and means to usurp the earnings of others.

That is why the Holy Qur'ān has said: وَإِثْمُهُمَآ أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا that is, the evils of wine and gambling are greater than their benefits.

Some juristic rules and related notes:

In this verse, the acknowledgement of some benefits of wine and gambling has been combined with the instruction to desist from them which helps us deduce the rule that the presence of material benefits in some thing or act is not contrary to its being declared *ḥaram* under the Islamic law. We know that a certain medicine or food item is called harmful if its harmful effects are far stronger than its benefits. If this was not so, nothing in this world, not even the worst, would turn out to be totally devoid of any benefit. A deadly poison, the snake and the scorpion and the wild beasts, they all have their benefits but, speaking generally, they are called harmful and people are told to watch out against them. Similarly, keeping in view the essential sense, things the evils of which are greater than their benefits are declared *ḥaram* or unlawful under the Shari'ah. None of the crimes such as theft, robbery, adultery, kidnapping and fraud are devoid of some benefit, for had they been totally benefitless no sane person would ever go near them, even though the most perfect people in all such crimes are those known for their tact and intelligence. This tells us that some or the other benefit does show up in all crimes but, since their harmfulness is greater than their benefit, no sane person stands up to declare them as useful and permissible. It is under this principle that the Sharī'ah of Islam has made wine and gambling unlawful.

2. This verse also provides the rule that the elimination of evil takes precedence over the acquisition of benefit, that is, should something give a certain benefit along with causing some harm, it becomes necessary to abandon the benefit in order to stay safe against the harm. In other words, a benefit which comes with harmfulness attached to it is ignored.

Verses 219 - 221

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ
الْآيَٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۝ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ
الْيَتَٰمَىٰ ۖ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَإِن تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ ۚ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْنَتَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝ وَلَا تَنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَٰتِ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَّ ۚ
وَلَأَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُنكِحُوا
الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۚ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكٍ
وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ
وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ ۖ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَٰتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ۝

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say, "The surplus". This is how Allah makes His verses clear to you, so that you may ponder on this world and the Hereafter. And they ask you about the orphans. Say, "To work for their good is good. And if you live with them jointly, they are, after all, your brethren. And Allah knows the one who makes mischief distinct from the one who promotes good. And if Allah had wished He would have put you in trouble. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise.

And do not marry the 'Mushrik' women unless they come to believe; and a Muslim slave-girl is better than a 'Mushrik' woman, even though she may attract you; and do not give (your women) in marriage to 'Mushrik' men unless they come to believe; and a Muslim slave is better than a 'Mushrik' even though he may attract you. They invite to the Fire when Allah invites, by His will, to the Paradise and to forgiveness, and makes His verses clear to the people, so that they may observe the advice. (Verses 219 - 221)

The first part of verse 219 related to the question asked about wine and gambling, a detailed explanation of which appears in previous pages.

The second part of the verse appearing here relates to another question -- about how much should be spent in charity. The answer given is '*al-'afw*' which has been translated here as 'the surplus'. It means that one should not, by such spending, get into personal trouble in the material life of this world, or by wasting away somebody's due right, get into the pain of answerability in the life to come.

Verse 220 features yet another question in a series of several posed by the noble Companions. This question relates to the combining of the cost of maintenance of orphans. Since there was general lack of carefulness about the rights of orphans in pagan Arabia, as elsewhere, warning was given that consuming what belongs to the orphans is like filling bellies with embers of Hell. Consequently, the recepients of this warning were so scared that they, out of preventive measure, started preparing and storing meals given to orphans separately. In case the child ate less, food was left over and, naturally so, got decomposed. The reason: It was not permissible for them to use food which belonged to the orphans, nor did they have the right to give what belonged to the orphans in charity. This was a matter of sheer discomfort and a source of loss to the orphans as well. Therefore, the situation was brought to the notice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ following which came the guidance given in this verse.

It is being said here that the purpose is not to compromise the welfare of the orphaned children. Since their welfare is served better through a joint expense system, there is nothing to worry about, for they are brothers-in-faith and brothers do share.

The above permission has been hemmed by a warning that Allah watches over the performance of guardians in this matter. He could have, by setting up a harder code of conduct, put them in trouble because He is All-Powerful. But, He has provided an easier code of conduct because He is All-Wise and does not obligate people with what they cannot do.

Verse 221 carries an injunction relating to marriage with *Mushrikin* (those who associate partners with Allah). The commentary which follows explains the injunction in some detail.

Inter-Marriage between Muslims and *Kāfirs* is Prohibited

In the verses under discussion an important ruling has been given. It states that the marriage of Muslim males with *Kāfir* (disbelieving in

Islam) females and the marriage of *Kāfir* females with Muslim males is not permissible. The reason is: *Kāfir* males and females become the cause that leads man into the Hell. Marital relations demand mutual love and harmony and without these the real purpose behind such relationship remains unrealized. If such close relations of love and affection are established with *Mushrikīn* or disbelievers, the inevitable effect will be that Muslims may emotionally tilt towards *Kufr* and *Shirk* or, in a lesser degree, the very abhorrence of *Kufr* and *Shirk* may just not remain there in their hearts. Consequently, they too, may get involved with *Kufr* and *Shirk* and thereby end up in Hell. Therefore, it was said that these people call everyone to come to Hell while Allah Almighty calls man to Paradise and to His forgiveness and, for this purpose, states His injunctions openly and clearly so that people follow the wise counsel. Let us consider a few points at this stage:

1. If the word, *Mushrik* in this verse is taken to mean non-Muslims as a whole it would be necessary to exempt non-Muslim women of the *Ahl al-Kitab* (the people of the Book) from the purview of this injunction, because it is expressly stated in another verse that:

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ

And good women from among those given the Book before you (marriage with whom is lawful for you). (5:5)

But if the word *Mushrik* is taken to mean specially those non-Muslims who are not from amongst the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book i.e. the Jews and the Christians), this verse needs no exception, because it covers only those non-Muslims who do not believe in any prophet and scripture.

2. Let us take the second important point. The Qur'ān forbids marital relations between Muslims and disbelievers for the reason that such close relations could become the source of involvement in *Kufr* and *Shirk*. Now this is apparently true of all non-Muslim groups. Why then, the women from amongst the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the Jews and the Christians) have been excluded?

The answer is obvious. The difference the people of the Book have with Islam is relatively lesser and lighter as compared with other non-Muslims. Islamic belief is tri-polar, that is, *Tauhīd* (Oneness of

God), *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) and *Risālah* (Prophethood). Out of these, if we consider the belief in *Ākhirah*, even the Jews and Christians from amongst the people of the Book agree with Muslims in accordance with their original faith, wherein, very similarly, it is *kufr* (infidelity) even in their original faith to attribute partners with God. That the Christians, in their love for Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, and in their over-enthusiasm towards respecting him, entered the borders of *Shirk*, is a different matter.

Now the basic difference that remains is that they do not believe in Muḥammad as His Messenger ﷺ. In Islam, this belief is cardinal. Without it, no one can become a true Muslim. However, the fact remains that the difference the people of the Book have is lesser and lighter as compared with other non-Muslim groups. Therefore, the danger of corruptibility is not that great here.

3. A question may be raised here that the difference between the people of the Book having been declared lighter, it was made permissible for Muslim men to marry their women. So the converse of this proposition, that is, the marriage of Muslim women with non-Muslim people of the Book, should also be permissible. But a little reflection will be sufficient to establish the basic difference between the two situations. Women are somewhat weaker by nature. Then the husband has been given a controlling and care-taking role. So the likelihood of a woman being impressed by his beliefs and views is not that remote. Therefore, should a Muslim woman stay in a marriage relationship with a non-Muslim *Kitābī*, (Christian or Jew) the chances of her belief being spoiled are strong.

Contrary to this, should a non-Muslim *Kitābī* woman (Jew or Christian) live married to a Muslim man, it is unlikely in principle that her ideas will impress the husband. Is someone takes to a converse position in total disregard of the normal principles and falls prey to his wife's instigation, it will be because of his own fault.

4. Let us clarify another doubt which may be raised here. The marital relations may influence both the parties equally. Therefore, if there is an apprehension that a Muslim spouse will be influenced by his or her counterpart in the matter of faith, there is also a counter possibility that the non-Muslim spouse will be influenced by his or her

Muslim spouse, whereupon he or she will embrace Islam. Both possibilities being equally open, the marital relations between Muslims and non-Muslims should not have been prohibited.

But the wisdom behind this prohibition is that where the danger of a harm and the hope of a benefit are equally applicable, then the reasonable attitude will be to pay more attention to preventing harm than to seeking benefit. There is a well-known Persian saying: عقلمند تریاق بیقین وزهر بگما نخورد i.e. A wise man does not eat the antedote with certainty and the poison with doubt. On the basis of this principle, the hope of the non-Muslim spouse embracing Islam has been ignored, and the apprehension of a Muslim spouse being impressed by the anti-Islamic faith or behaviour has been effectively taken care of.

5. The fifth point worth considering is that the meaning of the permission to Muslim men to marry Jewish and Christian women under formal *nikāh* (marriage contract) is simply to state that such *nikāh*, if made, will become valid and the children born out of this wedlock will be legitimate. But there are statements in *aḥādīth* which prove that even this *nikāh* is not viewed with favour. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that a Muslim should seek to marry a woman who fully observes Islamic faith and conduct -- so that she becomes for him a source of strength in their joint pursuit of their faith, and their progeny may have the opportunity to grow up under their care as practising Muslims. When marriage with a non-practising Muslim woman was not looked at with favour, how would it become favourable in the case of some non-Muslim woman? This is why Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضی اللہ عنہ, on learning that such marriages are finding alarming currency in Irāq and Syria, stopped these with an executive order which pointed out that such marital relations cause corruption in Muslim families both religiously and politically. (Kitāb al-Athar-lil-Imam Muḥammad). The effect of such marriages in contemporary times when non-Muslim people of the Book, the Jews and the Christians, have a record of political deception, political marriages, entry into Muslim families with persuasion techniques and spying objectives is too obvious and has been admitted by Christian writers themselves as reported in some details by Major General Akbar in his book, *Ḥadīth-e-Difā'*,

with proper references. It appears that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ was virtually looking into the future as it would come to be.

Specially in our days, there is another important reason for avoiding marital relations with the People of the Book. If the lives of a majority of contemporary Europeans (and Americans), who are called Jews and Christians, and are registered as such in their census records, were researched it will be discovered that an enormous lot of them have nothing to do with Christianity or Judaism. They are atheistically irreligious. They do not believe in Sayyidnā 'Isā علیہ السلام, or in the Bible. They do not believe in Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام, or in the Torah -- not even in God or a Day of Judgment. It is obvious that such people do not come under the purview of the Qur'ānic injunction permitting marriage (with the people of the Book). *Nikāh* (marriage) with their women is absolutely *ḥaram* (unlawful). It is clear that such people do not qualify for the exception given in the Qur'ānic verse :

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ

And good women from among those given the Book before you (marriage with whom is lawful for you).

Therefore, *nikāh* (marriage) with their women, like those of other non-Muslims, is absolutely *ḥaram* (unlawful).

Special notes from Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulanā Ashraf 'Ali Thānavī

1. It is not correct to marry women from among the group of people who, on the basis of their name and identity, are considered from among the people of the Book but are not proved to be so after a scrutiny of beliefs. For instance, common people these days take white westerners to be generally Christians although some of their beliefs have turned out to be totally atheistic under critical observation. How can people who do not believe in God, in the prophethood of Jesus Christ and in the Bible as revealed scripture be Christians?

Marrying a woman from such a group of people is not correct. Those who marry women from the West without finding out what is involved therein make a gross mistake.

2. Similarly, it is not correct to give a Muslim woman in marriage to a man who, in his outward status, is supposed to be a Muslim but whose beliefs are identical with those of a non-Muslim. And should

such corruption of beliefs occur after having been married, the *nikāh* or the marriage-contract breaks *ipso facto*. For instance, a large number of Muslims, in ignorance of their religion and under the influence of the so-called 'modern thinking', ruin their beliefs. It is, therefore, obligatory for the guardians of a girl that they should first investigate into the beliefs of the proposer before they accept the proposal.

Verses 222 - 223

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ ۖ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى ۙ فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَآءَ فِى
الْمَحِيضِ ۙ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتّٰى يَطْهُرْنَ ۚ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ
حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ
الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ○ نِسَآؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ ۠ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنّٰى شِئْتُمْ ۫
وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّكُمْ مُّلٰقُوهُ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ○

And they ask you about menstruation. Say: "It is an impurity. So, keep away from the women during menstruation; and do not have intimacy with them until they are cleansed. But when they are cleansed, then go unto them from where Allah has commanded you. Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those who keep themselves pure. Your women are for you a soil to cultivate. So, come unto your soil from where you will, and advance something for yourselves, and fear Allah and know that you are to meet Him and give good news to the believers." (Verses 222 - 223)

No sexual intercourse during menstruation

The basic purpose of these verses is to declare the prohibition of having sexual intercourse with a woman in a state of menstruation. If someone committed sexual intercourse in such a state either unknowingly or carelessly, he has to make *Taubah* (repentance). In this context it has been said in the verse 222 that "Allah loves those who are most repenting."

The verse 223 points out to the lawful ways of having sexual intercourse with one's woman. The permission of such intercourse has been subjected to two conditions. Firstly, it should take place at a time when the woman is pure from her menstruation. Secondly, carnal intercourse is not allowed at all. This verse begins with a comprehensive remark: "Your women are for you a soil to cultivate." Here the woman has been compared with a soil, while the husband has been compared with a cultivator. This is to indicate that the sexual intercourse has not been allowed for satisfying the sexual lust only, but also to make it a valid source for having children. By using this expression the Holy Qur'ān has given a subtle indication to the prohibition of carnal intercourse, even with one's wife, because it can never be a productive act, and there is no question of 'cultivation' therein.

Subject to these two conditions (namely, the purity of the woman from her menses, and avoiding the carnal intercourse) one can enjoy whatever way he wishes to have sexual intimacy with his wife. In this context, it has been said, "Come to your soil from where you will". It indicates that in so far as the ultimate place (of penetration) is a 'soil' (which stands for the female vagina which is productive like a soil), one can elect whatever way he likes to reach this ultimate place. Thus, lying over the woman or beside her or beneath her, acceding to the vagina from any side, front or back, sitting or kneeling -- all these and similar other positions are allowed while performing sexual intercourse subject to the two conditions mentioned above.

Verse 224

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللّٰهَ عُرْضَةً لِّاَيْمَانِكُمْ اَنْ تَبَرُّوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَ تُصْلِحُوْا
بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ○

And do not make Allah, through your oaths, a barrier against your doing good, fearing Allah and setting things right between people. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verse 224)

The Verse warns those who swear in the name of Allah that they will not do some vituous deeds or that they will not effect a compromise between two groups. The Verse reminds them that by this

behaviour they are using the name of Allah as a barrier against the good deeds, which is a severe violation of the sanctity of the name of Allah, and they must avoid it in any case.

Verse 225

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا
كَسَبَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ۝

Allah does not hold you accountable for what is ineffectual in your oaths, but holds you accountable for what your hearts have caused. And Allah is Forgiving, Forebearing. (Verse 225)

Note:

The *laghw* or ineffectual oath has two meanings:

(i) In the first case it means a false oath sworn without volition over something in the past, or it could have been sworn with volition while the oath-taker considers it to be true in his supposition. For example, guided by his information and supposition, one ends up declaring on oath that a certain person has arrived while that person had not arrived in reality. Similarly, if someone swears on oath for something in future unintentionally, while he has been actually wanting to say something else, but the words of oath come out of his lips mistakenly, this type of oath also falls in this category. All these three types are not an act of sin and that is why they are called *laghw* or ineffectual. This act will not be reprehensible in the Hereafter (*Ākhirah*). As compared to this, the oath which has been declared reprehensible is the one that has been uttered intentionally knowing it to be false. This is known as *ghamūs* (perjury), and is an act of sin, but according to the Ḥanafiyyah, it does not require *kaffarah* or expiation. Therefore, *laghw*, in the sense explained earlier, involves no *kaffārah* more obviously, (because it is not a sinful act). The verse under discussion exclusively takes up these two categories that carry no *kaffārah*.

(ii) *Laghw* also means that which has no *kaffārah*. It will be called as *laghw* because it does not entail the liability of *Kaffārah* in this world.

Given this meaning, the word, *laghw* is inclusive of *ghamūs*, which being an act of sin, however, does not require *kaffārah*.

As compared to this, the oath that requires *kaffārah* is called *mun'aqidah* (that which is established, confirmed: *fait accompli*). For instance, if someone intentionally declares on oath to the effect that he or she would or would not perform a certain act, then, acting contrarily requires *kaffārah*. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 226 - 227

لِلَّذِيْنَ يُؤْلُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ اَرْبَعَةِ اَشْهُرٍ ۚ فَاِنْ فَآءُوْ فَاِنَّ
اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ○ وَاِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ
عَلِيْمٌ○

Those who swear to abstain from their wives have four months of waiting. Therefore, if they revert back, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. And if they resolve to divorce, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verses 226 - 227)

Note:

If someone takes an oath that he will not have sexual intercourse with his wife, the case has four situations:

(A) No time-limit was fixed.

(B) A time-limit of four months was fixed.

(C) A time-limit of more than four months was fixed.

(D) The limit was identified as less than four months.

So, situations A, B and C are termed in Sharī'ah as *'Īlā'* (ایلاء). The injunction covering these situations is: If the oath-taker breaks his oath within four months and resumes sexual intercourse with his wife, he will have to come up with *kaffārah* for his oath while his *nikāh* (marriage) remains intact. And should it be that the time-limit of four months did expire and the oath-taker did not break his oath, an irrevocable divorce on his wife will become effective, that is, taking her back without remarriage does not remain correct any more. However, if they, by mutual consent, enter into marriage this will be correct. *Ḥalālah* (an intermediary marriage of the woman with a third person) is not required. The injunction in the fourth situation is: If the oath is

broken, *kaffārah* will be required and if the oath is completed, the marriage, even then, will remain valid. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 228

وَالْمُطَلَّقٰتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلٰثَةَ قُرُوْٓءٍ ؕ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ اَنْ
يَّكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِيْٓ اَرْحَامِهِنَّ اِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْاٰخِرِ ؕ وَبُعُوْلَتُهُنَّ اَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ اِنْ اَرَادُوْٓا اِصْلَاحًا ؕ
وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِيْ عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۪ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ O

And the divorced women shall keep themselves waiting for three periods. And it is not legal for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they do believe in Allah and in the last day. And their husbands are best entitled to take them back in the meantime if they want a settlement. And women have rights similar to what they owe as recognized, though for men there is a step above them. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Verse 228)

A great verse defining the status of man and woman

This verse contains a rule of Sharī'ah concerning the mutual rights and duties enjoined upon men and women and explains the degree of their role. Important details of this very rule appear before this verse, and again, after the verse, through several sections.

The place of women in Islam

At this point, it seems pertinent to explain to some extent the status given by Islam to women. If understood in its full perspective, it will certainly lead to the conclusion that a just and moderate social system would not have required more than this. It may be noted that this is the crucial place, any deviation or departure from which becomes a great danger for man's life here and in the Hereafter.

Deliberation would reveal that two things serve as the necessary basis for the survival and development of this world. These are: woman and wealth. But, a look at the other side of the coin shows that this twosome is also a source of disturbance, bloodshed and tribulation. Further deliberation would easily help one reach the

conclusion that although these two, given their real place in life, are instrumental in the progress of this world, yet, as and when, they are aimlessly moved away from their real place, they are capable of shaking the world like an earthquake.

The Qur'ān has given man a way of life, a system. Both these human factors have been assigned their correct respective places in a way that they yield the maximum benefits to the total exclusion of peacelessness. The proper place of wealth, the sources of its acquisition and the ways of spending it, as well as, a just system of the distribution of wealth is a regular field of knowledge. A detailed discussion of this subject will *Inshā Allāh* appear on some other occasion . My published treatise entitled, 'The Distribution of Wealth' could serve as an indicator of basics.

Being discussed here, at this point, is woman and her rights and duties. About this, the verse under reference states: As there are rights of men over women which must be given, so there are rights of women over men which must be given. However, the quantum of difference that must be recognized here is: Men have a 'step' above women. Almost the same subject has appeared in Sūrah Al-Nisā' in this manner:

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّبِمَا أَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

> Men stand care-takers of women, since Allah has made some of them excel the other, and because they have spent of their wealth. (4:34)

The status of women in pre-Islamic society

Before Islam, in the age of ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*), it was common practice that women were equated with articles of home use. They would be bought and sold like cattle. She had no right whatsoever in relation to her marriage. She had to go where she was sent by her guardians. Far from being entitled to some share in the inheritance from her relatives, she herself was treated as a piece of inheritance like any other household item. She was considered as something owned by men while she owned nothing. And, even that which she allegedly owned she could not spend without the permission of men.

However, her husband had all the right in the world to spend that which belonged to her as and how he elected to do so. She did not even have the right to question. So much so that some groups from amongst the European countries which are considered to be among the most civilized in the world today had reached the limit where they did not even accept that women were human beings!

Women had no place in religion. They were considered unfit for worship, and for Paradise. In some synods of Rome, it was decided after mutual consultations that she was a dirty animal which had no soul. Usually, it was considered permissible for a father to kill, or even, bury her daughter alive. In fact, this act was judged to be a mark of honour and a standard of nobility. There were some who held the opinion that anybody who killed a woman did not have to pay blood-money or be charged with retaliatory action. And should the husband die, the wife too was burnt alive with his dead body. Following the birth of the noble Prophet ﷺ and before his prophethood, in the year 586, France showed its compassion for women by passing a resolution, of course after great deliberation and controversy, that woman is after all a human being, but she has been created for the sole purpose of serving man!

In short, the whole world, and all nations and religions that inhabited it, had been treating women with callousness that makes one tremble with fear. For this poor creature, there was no reason, no justice, anywhere.

Ransomed be our lives for him who came as mercy for the worlds (ﷺ), and for the true religion which opened the eyes of the people of this world, taught man to respect man, made justice and equity the law, men were made responsible for the rights of women parallel to their own rights on them. Woman was made free and independent. She became the owner of her life and property, similar to men. No man can, even if he be a father or grandfather, force a woman to marry someone. Should she be given in marriage without her consent, the act remains dangling on her consent. If she says no, it stands annulled. No man has any right to spend anything from that which belongs to her, without her consent and approval. After the death of her husband or after having been divorced by him, she becomes independent and she

cannot be compelled by anyone for anything. She gets a share in the inheritance of her relatives just like men. To spend on her and to keep her happy has been declared an act of *'ibādah* (worship) under the blessed law of Muḥammad, on him be peace and blessing. Should the husband fail to give the rights due, she could, through an Islamic court, force him to do so or to divorce her.

Man's guardianship is essential for peace and order

Not giving women their due rights was ranked as injustice, oppression, stinginess and villainy which was erased by Islam. Similarly, leaving them to go their way with an unbridled liberty from the guardianship and care of men, and to make them earn their own sustenance and life support amounts to wasting her rights and destroying her genius. Neither does she deserve that fate in view of her physique nor does that great mission of bringing up children and the charge of family management, which has been naturally entrusted to her, deserve it.

In addition to that, women are, when deprived of the guardianship and care of men, a great danger for the whole human society, a situation that is bound to create all sorts of disturbances, including riots and bloodshed, as a matter of daily routine. That is why the noble Qur'an, while stating the mandatory rights of women, also declared وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ that is, men are a step above women which, in still other words, amounts to saying that men are responsible for them as their caretakers.

As it was in the first age of ignorance before Islam, all nations of the world, by keeping women as a household item or a dumb animal, had fallen prey to this mistake. So it came to pass that, following Islam's age of decadence, there started a later age of ignorance. Here the first mistake is being matched by yet another mistake, as a reaction in the opposite direction, when efforts are being made continuously to get rid of even this much degree of precedence men have over women. As a result, obscenity and shamelessness became common, the world became a home of conflicts and disorder, and bloodshed became so cheap that the first age of ignorance remained no match anymore. There is an Arab saying: الجاهل إما مفرط أومفرط which means: The ignorant man never stays on moderation. If he decides to stay from acting excessively, he slides into a behaviour of neglect.

This is the prevailing attitude in the world of today. There was that time when they were not even prepared to call or understand women as a member of the human race. Now they have advanced to the limit that the 'yoke' of man's guardianship and caretaking of women, which is perfectly wise and suitable universally for men, and women, is being thrown away, the ill consequnces of which are becoming visible everyday. And believe it, unless they bow down before this noble statement of the Qur'an, such disorders will go on increasing day by day.

Governments today make new laws incessantly to bring peace into the world. New institutions are established for this purpose. Millions are spent but the source of disorders goes unnoticed by them. If a Commission of Inquiry was to be established to determine the causes of disorder, bloodshed and internecine wars, it is likely that the cause of more than fifty percent of such crimes will turn out to be woman and her unbridled freedom. But, in the contemporary world, the prevailing pursuit of desires has confounded even the best of minds. No corrective check against the worship of desires is even entertained.

May Allah Almighty enlighten our hearts with the light of faith and help us act according to the guidance given in His Book and in the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ because that is our blessed capital both in in this world and in the Hereafter.

A Conflict and its Resolution

We find out from this verse that the Qur'ān tells the husband and wife about duties assigned to each, whereby men have been placed under obligation to give women their rights, in the same manner as women have been placed under obligation to give men their rights. This indicates that each party should watch out on the fulfillment of its respective duties rather than go after demanding rights. And should they succeed in doing so, the very issue of demanding rights will cease to exist, because the duties of men are the rights of women and the duties of women are the rights of men. When duties are taken care of, rights will be automatically fulfilled. These days the root of all troubles lies in the attitude of people who are alert to their rights but negligent of their duties.

As a result, rights are demanded on a war footing as is evident

from the current confrontation between governments and masses, husbands and wives and between other authorities and their challengers. This indicator of the Qur'ān has modified the confrontational aspect of the issue by stressing that everyone should make all possible effort to fulfil his or her duties and when it comes to his or her own rights try to overlook any infringements gently, forego and forgive. If this teaching of the Qur'ān could become common universal practice, homes, families, even countries and governments will find that most of their conflicts have been resolved for good.

Man's higher position over woman is for discipline only

A universal system in the world, the human nature and the best interests of women themselves required that men be not only given a particular sort of controlling and care-taking right over women, but that it be rather made incumbent on them. This is what has been stated in the verse اَلرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ : 'Men stand care-takers of women.' But, this does not necessarily entail that all men are superior to all women because being superior in the sight of Allah wholly depends on belief and good conduct. In Divine dispension, the increase or decrease in degrees operates in synchronization with the degrees of belief and conduct. Therefore, in matters relating to the Hereafter, it is not necessary that men alone should continue to have that step or degree above women. This too is possible and, as elaborated in Qur'ānic verses and *Ḥadith* narrations, this is what would come to pass -- that some women, through their obedience to and worship of Allah, will become superior to many men with their degree of precedence rising higher than many a men.

Although the Holy Qur'ān, while describing the injunctions of Sharī'ah, according to its own clear stress, declares that men and women are absolutely equal and the injunctions where there is some difference have been expressly explained, but the address is generally to men and the gender used is masculine. This treatment, however, is not peculiar to the noble Qur'ān. Governments too, use the masculine gender in their laws fairly commonly, although the law is universally applicable to men and women both.

One immediate reason for this is the very difference identified in the verses of the noble Qur'ān, that is, for men there is a step above women.

The second consideration, perhaps implied here as well, may be

that *satr* (concealment) is better even when there is a discussion about *mastūrāt* (women: the concealed ones). But, when women realized that the noble Qur'ān does not address them directly at various places like it does address men, the venerated mother of the faithful, Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی الله عنها pointed this out to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and thereupon the following verse of the Sūrah Al-Ahzāb was revealed:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمٰتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْقٰنِتِينَ وَالْقٰنِتٰتِ

> Submitting men and submitting women, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women ... (This appears in details in Nasā'ī, Musnad Aḥmad and Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr etc.)

where women were clearly and expressly identified along with men which implies that the status of women is no less than men in obedience to Allah and in His worship, in being near Him and His approval, and in the ranks of Paradise.

According to a report in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, some Muslim women came to the the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked about the general absence of any mention of Muslim women in the Holy Qur'ān, while it does mention men at several places, and also refers to the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from among women. Thereupon, the verse referred to above was revealed.

To sum up, it can be said that a certain measure of precedence and authority in regulating the affairs of worldly life is for the good of women and that wisdom so dictates. Other than that, there is no difference in the reward and retribution for deeds, good or bad, and in the degree of merit attained in the Hereafter.

The same subject appears in the noble Qur'ān with much more clarity in the following manner:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً

> And whosoever male or female, does a righteous deed, while he (or she) is a believer, we shall assuredly get him (or her) to live a goodly life. (16:97)

After these preliminary remarks let's ponder over the words of the original verse under discussion. It was said: وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِىْ عَلَيْهِنَّ : "And women have rights similar to what they owe" that is, their rights are

incumbent upon men similarly as the rights of men are incumbent upon them. Here the rights of women were mentioned before the rights of men, one reason for which is that man after all, given his physical power and God-given precedence, manages to wrest his rights from women anyway. The concern should be for the rights of women since they cannot habitually wrest their rights by force.

There is yet another hint here which suggests that men should take the first step to give the rights of women. However, the similarity and equivalency declared by the use of the word *mithl* (مِثْل : like, similar) in the text here could just never mean that the kind of job men do should also be done by women, or vice versa, because the distribution of work and respective duties for men and women are naturally different. In fact, it means that it is obligatory that rights belonging to both be observed equally and mutually and that the punishment for any negligence or shortcoming be also equal.

It is worth observing at this point how the noble Qur'ān has, in a sentence so small, miniaturized a whole roster of rights and duties since all rights women have over men and all rights men have over women are included under the sense of this verse. (Muhit) Simply by adding one more word بِالْمَعْرُوف (*bi l'ma'rūf*: justly, uprightly, kindly, courteously, according to the practice approved by the Shari'ah, or simply - "as recognized", a closer expression used in the accompanying translation of the verse) the possible occurrence of mutual controversies was eliminated. It was established that rights should be given using the *ma'rūf* method because the meaning of *ma'rūf* includes that which is neither prohibited nor impermissible under the dictates of the Shari'ah nor does it have any element of hardship or excess under common habit or custom or *'ūrf*. The purport is that observing the routine of legal provisions is not enough, instead, it will be examined that, according to *'ūrf* or customarily approved practice, the other party does not in any case suffer from pain or loss. That which is judged to be a source of pain and loss, in view of *'ūrf*, will be forbidden and remain impermissible, for instance, coldness, indifference or such behaviour or conduct which causes pain. These can hardly be covered under an article of law but the word *bi l'ma'rūf* does encompass them. After that it was said: وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ :'Though for men there is a step

above them.' The well-known meaning and sense of this verse is that despite the rights of the parties being equal, Allah Almighty has bestowed upon men a certain degree of precedence and authority over women. That there is great wisdom in doing so has been hinted at by the use of the words وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ :"And Allah is Mighty, Wise" towards the end of the verse. Giving the meaning of this sentence, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ تعالیٰ عنہما has added that Allah Almighty has given men a degree of precedence as compared to women, therefore they should act with much more forbearance. Even if women fall short of giving them their rights, the degree of their precedence is such that they should bear by it, be patient and do nothing to desist from giving them their rights. (Qurṭubi)

Verses 229 - 230

اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ فَاِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِيْحٌ بِاِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَاْخُذُوْا مِمَّا اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ شَيْئًا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّخَافَآ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيْمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهٖ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوْهَا وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۝ فَاِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهٗ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتّٰى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهٗ فَاِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَآ اَنْ يَّتَرَاجَعَآ اِنْ ظَنَّآ اَنْ يُّقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

Divorce is twice; then either to retain in the recognized manner or to release in fairness. And it is not lawful for you to take back anything from what you have given them, unless both apprehend that they would not be able to maintain the limits set by Allah. Now, if you apprehend that they would not maintain the limits set by Allah, then, there is no sin on them in what she gives up to secure her release. These are the limits set by Allah. Therefore, do not exceed them. And whosoever exceeds limits set by Allah, then, those are the transgressors.

Thereafter, if he divorces her, she shall no longer remain lawful for him unless she marries a man other than him. Should he too divorce her, then there is no sin on them in their returning to each other, if they think they would maintain the limits set by Allah. And these are the limits set by Allah that He makes clear to a people who know (Verses 229 - 230).

Commentary

The injunctions governing *ṭalāq* (divorce) and *nikāh* (marriage) appear in several verses throughout the Qur'ān but the verses mentioned here consist of cardinal rules of procedure in cases of divorce. To understand these, it is necessary to know the status of *Nikāh* in the Sharī'ah of Islam.

Marriage, divorce and the rules governing them

One commonly known aspect of *Nikāh* (marriage) is that of a mutual transaction and contract similar to transactions in buying and selling and in loans and payments. The second aspect is that of *Sunnah* and *'Ibādah*. On this, there is a consensus of the whole *ummah* that *nikāh*, being far above ordinary transactions and contracts, has the status of *'Ibādah* and *Sunnah* (the act of worshipping Allah and following in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ). Therefore, in order that *nikāh* be duly solemnized, there are, by the consensus of the *ummah*, some peculiar conditions which are not found in ordinary transactions of buying and selling.

First of all, *nikāh* cannot take place between any man and any woman. Governing this, there is an absolute law of the Sharī'ah under which several categories of men and women cannot be joined together in the bond of marriage.

Secondly, for all transactions and contracts, in order that they be concluded and finalized, witness is no condition. A witness is needed when parties differ, but *nikāh* is not such a transaction. Here, in order that it be concluded, the physical presence of witnesses is a pre-condition. If a man and woman, the two of them mutually agree to have their marriage solemnized without witnesses, and even if, any one of the two never differs or retreats, that marriage is, according to the Sharī'ah, still invalid, unless both respond to the proposal and acceptance before witnesses. However, the *Sunnah* is that '*nikāh*' must

be solemnized with a public announcement. Similarly, there are many other conditions and rules of decorum that are either necessary or *masnūn* in marriage.

According to Imām Abū Hanīfah, and several other leading Muslim jurists, the aspect of *'Ibādah* (worship) and *Sunnah* in *nikāh* dominates over the aspect of transaction and contract. Evidences from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* support it.

After this brief familiarity with the real nature of marriage, let us understand divorce. The outcome of *ṭalāq* (divorce) is to terminate the transaction and contract of *nikāh* (marriage). Just as the Sharī'ah of Islam, by giving *nikāh* the status of an act of *'Ibādah*, has kept it at a level higher than common transactions and contracts and has imposed on it several restrictions, very similarly, the termination of this deal has not been left free, as in common transactions, where the parties may terminate the deal as and when they elect to do so, and go on to make a fresh deal with someone else. It has rather made a pointedly wise legal framework which has been described in the verses under reference.

According to the drift of Islamic teachings, the transaction and contract of *nikāh* should be for the whole life-span. The point of departure where it has to be broken or terminated should never be reached because the discontinuation of this deal affects not only the parties involved but goes on to destroy children, and their children, and at times, it may even cause whole families and tribes to end up with disturbed relations, which in turn, badly infects the whole society. Therefore, the teachings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* have taken all necessary steps to remove impediments that may cause the breaking of this deal. The focal drive of instructions given in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* covering all problems and situations relating to the married couples is that this relationship should always keep on becoming stronger and stronger and may just never break. Should disagreements crop up, instructions were given to first try and understand each other's point of view and talk it out, and in the event of failure, ways of restraint, hard advice and warning were identified. Should the tussle become serious and these elementary steps do not bring a resolution of crisis, the parties were then expected to set up a

panel for arbitration comprising of the members of their immediate families who could help patch up the differences. The emphasis on making members of the family as sole arbitrators in the verse حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَ حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا :'Then send one arbitrator from his people and one from her people' is certainly very wise since the tussle, if it escapes the immediate family circle, will only aggravate the situation and the parties may draw further apart.

But there are occasions and situations when all efforts for reconciliation fail and the parties in conflict rather than benefit by the desired results of the *nikāh* relationship, feel that being married together is a mutual punishment. Under such conditions, terminating this husband-wife relationship becomes, in itself, a way-out promising comfort and peace for the parties. Therefore, the Sharī'ah of Islam did not, as did some other religions, patently confirm that the marriage relationship must remain unbreakable under all conditions. Going a step ahead, it has framed a specific law for divorce and the dissolution of marriage. The right of divorce was given to man alone in whom the ingredients of thought, end-perception and forbearance were more pronounced than in a woman. This free choice was not given in the hands of women so that the disposition of being overtaken by transitory emotions, which is more pronounced in women as compared to men, may not become the cause of divorce.

But women too, were not totally deprived of this right lest they are left with no alternative but to keep groaning under the cruelty of her husband. She was given the right to take her case to a court presided by a judge who qualifies as such under the rules of Sharī'ah, present her complaint, prove her case, and get the marriage annulled, or secure a divorce. Then, as it is, Allah Almighty did entrust man with the free choice of divorce, but at the very first instance, it was declared that the use of this choice was very much detested and disapproved in the sight of Allah. It was permitted only in extreme situations of compulsion. It appears in *Ḥadīth*: أبغض الحلال إلى الله الطلاق : Divorce is the most detested of lawful things with Allah.

The second restriction placed stipulated that this choice should not be used in extreme anger or fleeting displeasure. It was due to this wisdom that the pronouncing of divorce was forbidden during the

period of menstruation, as well as, during a *ṭuhr* (the state of purity) in which the husband has had sexual intercourse with the wife. The pronouncing of divorce during menstruation and in a *tuhr* marked by intimacy was forbidden on the basis that it would become the contributing reason to elongate the *'iddah* or 'waiting period' of the woman, which will aggravate her pain and worry. For these two situations, the noble Qur'ān has this to say: طَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ that is, divorce -- if it has to be given -- should be given at a time when the *'iddah* of the woman does not become longer without any reason. If divorce became effective during menstruation, that particular menstruation will not be counted in *'iddah*. The count of *'iddah* will begin from the next menstruation. And in a *ṭuhr* marked with intimacy, the chances of pregnancy exist, which would elongate the period of *'iddah*, upto the time of delivery. Another reason for fixing the time of *tuhr*, mentioned earlier for the pronouncement of divorce is that it is quite possible that in the meantime the anger goes away, forgiveness and recompense follow and the very idea of divorce is withdrawn.

Now under the third restriction, the method adopted in breaking the marriage- contract and its annulment was not kept identical with that of the transactions and contracts of common buying and selling activity which releases the parties concerned of all obligations instantly once the contract is annulled. The first deal is all over and everybody gets the option to enter into another contract with some other party. In fact, in order to sever the marriage-relationship, *ṭalāq* has been subjected to three stages. Then it was topped with the restriction of *'iddah* since a lot of residual effects of the *nikāh*-relationship will remain active until the completion of *'iddah*. Another marriage will not be lawful for the woman. Some restriction on the man would also continue.

The fourth restriction stipulates if divorce was given once or twice in clear and unambiguous words, *nikāh* did not break instantly on the pronouncement of *talaq*; the marriage relationship continues till the completion of *'iddah*. If the husband revokes the *talāq*, the previous *nikāh* will remain valid.

This choice of *rujū'* (revocation or the act of taking back one's divorced wife) was restricted to only one or two *ṭalāqs*, so that some

cruel husband may not make a practice of giving *ṭalāqs*, and then take her back and keep her as some captive. Therefore, came the injunction: If someone pronounces the third *talāq* as well, he now has no choice of *rujū'* (revocation), that is, he cannot take his wife back. In fact, even if they wish to remarry after mutual agreement, their being joined together in marriage a second time is not lawful, except in a peculiar manner which has been described later on.

The verses under study consist of important injunctions relating to this system of divorce. Now let us ponder over the words of these verses. In the beginning of the verse it was first said: اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ that is, '*ṭalāq* is twice'. Then, in the process of these two ṭalāqs, a certain flexibility was provided by virtue of which the marriage was not totally annulled; instead, the man has the choice to return to his wife and retain her in his marriage. Or, he may elect not to do his *rujū'* (revocation) from the earlier pronouncements, allow the *'iddah* to be completed and once the *'iddah* is over, the marriage relationship will be terminated. This subject was stated in the words فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْتَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ (then either to retain in the recognized manner or to release in fairness) that is, either, one must revoke divorce and retain his wife in his marriage, or, allow her *'iddah* or the waiting period to be completed nicely and generously so that she can become free.

The third *ṭalāq* (pronouncement of divorce) still remains unmentioned while the text takes up another problem in between, which generally comes up for discussion under such conditions. The problem is that there are some cruel husbands who neither wish to retain their wives, nor care about their rights, nor give them divorce. The wife is placed in a situation of duress while the husband, taking advantage of her helplessness, demands some money or property from her, or as a last resort, demands that the *mahr* (dower) be forgiven, or returned in lieu of divorce. The Qur'ān declares this to be *ḥaram* (unlawful). It was said:

وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا اٰتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا

that is, it is not *ḥalal* (lawful) for you that, in return for *talāq*, you take back from them money or *mahr* (dower) or anything else given by you.

However, one exception was made in which forgiveness or return of

mahr (dower) was made permissible. Where the woman feels that she cannot do justice to the rights of her husband because of difference in temperaments and the man too, feels the same way, then this becomes a situation in which it is also permissible that divorce be given or taken in lieu of the forgiveness or return of *mahr* (dower).

After dealing with the above problem, the third *ṭalāq* was mentioned in this manner فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ that is, if that person goes on to pronounce the third *talaq* as well (something not liked by the Sharī'ah), the transaction of *nikāh* shall stand totally annulled. He has exhausted his choice to revoke his divorce and take his wife back. And since he transgressed the limits of Sharī'ah by unnecessarily giving the third *ṭalāq*, he must now have his punishment whereby it is not possible for them to remarry each other even if both of them agree to do so. Now, in order that they could remarry each other, the condition of such *nikāh* is that the woman (after completing her period of *'iddah* following *ṭalāq*) should enter into marriage with another man, fulfil matrimonial obligations and live with this other husband. Thereafter, if by chance that other husband also divorces her (or dies), she could remarry the first husband after completing her *'iddah*. The last sentence of the verse says:

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا

> Should he too divorce her, then there is no sin on them in their returning to each other.

Detailed injunctions regarding three divorces at a time

A close look at the style of the noble Qur'ān makes it explicitly clear that the right method of pronouncing *ṭalāq* stipulated by the Shari'ah is that one should, at the most, reach the limit of two talaqs and it is not appropriate to reach to the extent of a third *ṭalāq*. After the use of words اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ in verse 229, the third *ṭalāq* is identified in the words فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا (Then, if he divorces her) wherein the letter ان (if) is note-worthy. Here the hint in question is visibly present. Otherwise, the third *talāq* could simply be expressed by saying الطلاق ثلث :'The divorces are three.' Now the text, to the exclusion of expressions to this effect, has an expression of its own which carries a clear hint that one should not reach the stage of the third *ṭalāq*. This is why Imām Mālik

and several other jurists did not just permit the third *ṭalāq*. They call it *ṭalāq al-bid'ah* (the innovated *ṭalāq*: divorce without the authority of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*). Some other jurists have ruled that three *talaqs* are permissible only on condition that these three talaqs be pronounced separately in three *ṭuhr*s (the state of post-menstrual purity). In the terminology used by these jurists this too has been termed as *ṭalāq al-sunnah*. But none of them are proposing by this term that giving three talaqs in this manner is desirable, and is according to the *Sunnah*. In fact, this was given the name of *ṭalāq al-sunnah* as opposed to *ṭalāq al-bid'ah* for the simple reason that this form does not amount to *bid'ah* (an innovation in settled religious practice).

The gist of that which stands proved regarding the *ṭalāq* count, on the authority of the guidance given by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and the practice of the Companions of the the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their followers is this: When no option, except that of *ṭalāq*, is left, the best method of pronouncing *talaq* is to pronounce one *ṭalāq* during the state of *ṭuhr* (purity) in which sexual intercourse has not taken place. Then, let this one *ṭalāq* stay as such. As soon as the *'iddah* finishes, the *nikāḥ* relationship will automatically be finished with it. The Muslim Jurists have called it *al-ṭalāq al-ahsan* and the respected Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have declared it as the best method of *ṭalāq*.

Ibn Abi Shaybah has reported from Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī that the noble *saḥābah* favoured the method in which, after giving one *ṭalāq*, nothing is done thereafter and the *'iddah* of *ṭalāq* -- three menstruation periods -- are allowed to expire so that the woman would become free.

From the words of the noble Qur'ān mentioned earlier, the permission to pronounce upto two ṭalāqs can also be deduced, but by the use of the word مَرَّتَانِ (twice) it has been pointed out that two talaqs should not be given in one utterance and at one time but should be given separately in two *ṭuhr*s (states of purity). The use of أَلطَّلاقُ طَلاقَانِ (Two *ṭalāqs* are permissible) could also have helped prove the permission of two ṭalāqs but the word مَرَّتَانِ suggests that the two ṭalāqs

should be given at two separate occasions, that is in two separate *ṭuhrs* (states of purity).[50] (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

In short, the limit of two talāqs stands proved from the words of the Qur'ān. Therefore, by consensus of Imāms and *fuqahā'* (Muslim Jurists), this *talāq* is included in *Sunnah*, that is, it is not a *bid'ah* (innovation). That the third *ṭalāq* is undesirable is clearly indicated in the Qur'ānic diction itself. That this is undesirable has not been questioned by anyone.

As to how detested and reprehensible the third *ṭalāq* is stands proved by a *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Imām al-Nasa'ī reports on the authority of Maḥmud ibn Labid that:

أخبر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن رجل طلق أمرأته ثلاث تطليقات جميعا فقام غضبانا ، ثم قال: أيلعب بكتاب الله وأنابين أظهركم حتى قام رجل و قال: يا رسول الله ألا أقتله ؟

The noble Prophet ﷺ was told about a man who had divorced his wife by pronouncing three talaqs simultaneously. He rose in anger, then said: 'What is this game being played with Allah's Book while I am present amongst you?' In the meantime, a man stood up and said: Yā Rasūlallāh! should I not kill him? (Nasa'ī, Kitāb al-Ṭalāq, vol.2, p. 98) [51]

Based on this, Imām Mālik and some other leading *fuqahā'* (jurists) have ruled that the third *ṭalāq* is absolutely impermissible and that it is *ṭalāq al-bid'ah* (a divorce based on innovation in religious practice and not supported by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*). Other Imāms, by saying that three talaqs given in three *ṭuhrs* (states of purity) are included under *sunnah ṭalāq*, have though excluded it from the purview of *ṭalāq al-bid'ah*, but there is no difference of opinion as to its being undesirable.

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50. The use of the adverb, 'twice' to stand for the Qur'ānic word, '*marratan*' in the accompanying translation is to cover this element of sequence and deferment for, lexically, 'twice' means -- on two occasions or two times.

51. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Qaiyyim has ruled that the *isnad* of this *hadīth* is *sahīh* according to the conditions prescribed by Muslim (Zad al-Ma'ad). 'Allamah al-Mardini, in his *al-Jauhar al-Naqi*, calls the *sanad* of this *hadith* -- *sahih*, Ibn Kathir terms the *isnad* as excellent and Ibn Hajar finds this 'narrated by the reliable'.

To summarize, it can be said that the three stages of *ṭalāq* (divorce) established by the Sharī'ah of Islam in the form of three ṭalāqs, do never mean that crossing these three stages are necessary or better. Instead, the intent of the Sharī'ah is that the very initial step towards divorce is a detestable and reprehensible act. If such a step has to be taken under dire compulsion, it is only proper that its lowest possible stage, that is, one (pronouncement of) *talāq* be considered sufficient, allowing *'iddah* (the waiting period) to take its course. Once the *'iddah* is over, this very one *talāq* will become sufficient to sever the husband-wife relationship and the woman shall become free to marry another person. This method of *ṭalāq* is called *aḥsān*, that is, the best. In this method there is wisdom, and an element of advantage as well, since the option of reconciliation will remain open for the parties concerned in the event only one *ṭalāq* has been given in clear words to that effect. Only taking the *ṭalāq* back before the expiry of *'iddah* will be sufficient to sustain the *nikāh*. And after the *'iddah* has expired, the *nikāh* will, no doubt, be broken and the woman set free, but there still will remain room for reconciliation between them, and should they reconcile and wish to remarry each other, the fresh *nikāh* could be solemnized immediately.

But, should a person who does not stick with this method of *aḥsan ṭalāq* and goes on to pronounce one more *ṭalāq* in clear and unambiguous words during the period of *'iddah*, he then, completes two stages of the severance of *nikāh*, which was unnecessary, and certainly not approved by the Sharī'ah. However, two stages stand completed anyway. But the position, inspite of the completion of these two stages, stays where it was, that is, the choice of *raj'ah* (revocation) or return (to one's wife) during the period of *'iddah* remains open and a fresh *nikāh* could be made by the mutual agreement of the parties concerned after the expiry of the period of *'iddah*. The only difference is that the husband has, by reaching the count of two talaqs, broken one more chain of his choices and arrived at the borderline from where the pronouncement of just one more *ṭalāq* by him would end the matter for ever.

For one who has gone through these two stages of *ṭalāq*, the instruction given later is: فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْتَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ :'Then either to retain in the recognized manner or to release in fairness.' Here two

injunctions have been communicated through the words فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ. Firstly, revocation during *'iddah* does not require fresh *nikāh*; instead, only *imsāk*, that is, retaining one's wife by revoking the *ṭalāq* is sufficient. If this was done, the marriage relationship will stand reinstated on the very basis of the previous *nikāh*.

Secondly, through this, the husband was instructed to take steps to effect his *raj'ah* (revocation) only if he intends to correct the situation and looks forward to living in peace and harmony; if not, he should pass this option so that the marriage relationship ends following the completion of *'iddah*. The concern here is that *raj'ah* (revocation) may not be done just to harass the woman without any intention of correcting the situation.

To match this, it was said: أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ. The word, *Tasrīḥ* means to untie, to free, to release. Through this, it was pointed out that in order to sever relations, no additional *ṭalāq*, or for that mater, no other action is necessary. That the *'iddah* (waiting period) expires without revocation is, in itself, sufficient to end the marriage relationship.

Abu Dawud reports on the authority of Abū Razīn al-Asadī that, following the revelation of this verse, a man asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Allah Almighty has said: اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ (Divorce is twice). Why the third *ṭalāq* was not mentioned here?' He said: 'The expression تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ (To release in fairness) which follows immediately, is the third *ṭalāq*.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). It means, according to the consensus of *'ulamā'*, that the act of the total severance of marriage relationship which would come out of the third *ṭalāq*, would be taken care of by this mode of action, that is, by not revoking the divorce during the period of *'iddah*. Now, just as, by placing the restrictive condition of بِمَعْرُوفٍ (in recognized manner) along with إِمْسَاكٌ (retaining), the instruction was given that the wife, if retained after the revocation of *ṭalāq* pronouncement (*raj'ah)*, should be retained in good grace. Very similarly, by placing the restrictive condition of بِإِحْسَانٍ (in fairness) along with تَسْرِيحٌ (release), the instruction was given that *ṭalāq* is the dissolution of transaction and gentlemen go through their transactions and contracts in good taste and manners and in the event dissolution of contract becomes necessary, that too, should not be done with anger or altercation, instead, that should be done with charity, kindness and grace, for instance, while saying goodbye to the divorced wife, let her depart with some presents, such as clothing and its likes. This is mentioned in the Qur'ān:

وَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمُوسِعِ قَدَرُهُ وَ عَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهُ

So, give them benefit -- the rich man according to his means and the poor one according to his means. (2:236)

And, if he, in spite of this, elects not to do so, rather, going a step farther, pronounces the third *ṭalāq* as well, he now has reached a dead end where he has, quite unreasonably and unnecessarily, done away with all his options, ignoring in that process, graces allowed by the Sharī'ah. The punishment he now deserves is that *raj'ah* (revocation) will not be possible, and without the wife marrying someone else, the couple's being re-united in marriage will also be not possible.

Three divorces given unlawfully are effective

The immediate, rational and conventional answer to this question is that the nature of an act in being a crime and a sin does not stop it from taking effect anywhere. Killing unjustly is a crime and a sin. But one who is shot with a bullet, or struck with a sword, gets killed after all. His death does not wait to discover if the bullet was fired legally or illegally. Stealing is a crime and a sin by the consensus of all religions, but that which has been stolen as such leaves the possession of the owner anyway. Similarly, all sins and crimes are hemmed in by the same situation -- that their being sin and crime does not stop them from taking effect.

In accordance with the dictates of this principle, the false steps taken, such as, the ignoring of concessions given by the Sharī'ah and shooting upto three talaqs unnecessarily, bypassing all choices of *ṭalāq* one has, no doubt, became a cause of anger for the Holy Prophet ﷺ as stated in the previous report, and for this reason, this act was considered 'undesirable' by the consensus of the *ummah*, and 'impermissible' by some; but, if inspite of all this, someone has taken such a step, it should bring forth the same effect as would be that of a permissible *ṭalāq*, that is, three talaqs become effective and not only the choice of *raj'ah* (revocation) but also the very choice of fresh *nikāh* stands negated.

And the decision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a testimony that he, in spite of his showing anger against giving three divorces, enforced the three talaqs, several incidents relating to which appear in books of *aḥādith*. The *'ulamā'* who have written regular books on this subject

have collected these incidents therein. Recently, '*Umdah al-Athath*', a book written on this subject by Maulanā Abū al-Zāhid Muḥammad Sarfarāz has been published and is sufficient enough. Quoted here are only three *aḥādith*.

The report by Maḥmud ibn Labīd mentioned earlier with reference to al-Nasa'ī does record the expression of extreme anger by the Messenger of Allah on the giving of three talaqs at one time, so much so, that some *ṣaḥābah* (Companions) thought that the person deserved being killed. But this is not reported anywhere that he ruled the man's *ṭalāq* to be a revocable *ṭalāq* and let the man have his wife back.

On the contrary, the second report that follows clearly indicates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has enforced the three simultaneous talaqs of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir in spite of displeasure. Very similarly, Qāḍī Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī has, in relation to the previously quoted *hadīth* of Mahmud ibn Labid, reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had enforced his three talaqs similar to the three talaqs of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir. His words are:

فلم يرده النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم بل امضاه كما فى حديث عويمر العجلانى فى اللعان حيث امضى طلاقه الثلاث ولم يرده

So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not reject it. He enforced it instead. As it appears in 'Uwaymir al-'Ajlānī's *ḥadīth* of *li'ān*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had enforced his three talaqs and had not rejected it.

The second *ḥadīth*, that of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها appears in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī in the following words:

ان رجلا طلق امرأته ثلاثا فتزوجت فطلق فسئل النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم اتحل للاول قال حتى يذوق عسيلتها كما ذاقها الاول

A man pronounced three talaqs on his wife. When the woman married elsewhere, the other husband also divorced her. The noble Prophet ﷺ was asked: 'Is this woman *ḥalal* (lawful)?' He said: 'Not unless the other husband has had intimacy with her as was done by the first husband.'

The words of the the report indicate that the three talaqs were given at the same time. Commentaries on *Ḥadīth*, such as Fath

al-Bārī, 'Umdah al-Qārī, al-Qastalānī, confirm this reading of the report, that is, three ṭalāqs were given at the same time. And the *ḥadīth* carries the decision thereupon, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ made these three ṭalāqs effective and ruled that, unless there occurs marital intimacy with the second husband, she will not become lawful for the first husband, simply by having been divorced by the former.

The third report is that of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir al-'Ajlānī, who did his *li'ān* (لعان : sworn allegation of adultery) against his wife in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and following that, he said:

فلما فرغا قال عويمر كذبت عليها يا رسول الله ان امسكتها فطلقها ثلاثا قبل ان يامره النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم

So when they were through with *li'ān*, 'Uwaymir said: 'I shall be telling a lie if I retained her'. Then, he gave her three talaqs before the Holy Prophet ﷺ could give his verdict. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī including Fath al-Bārī Sahih Muslim page 289, volume1)

And Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه has, on the authority of Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Sa'd, reported this incident in the following words:

فانفذه رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وكان ماصنع عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم سنة قال سعد حضرت هذا عند رسول الله صلى عليه وسلم فمضت السنة بعد فى المتلاعنين ان يفرق بينهما ثم لا يجتمعان ابدا

Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ enforced it, and that which happened in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ became established as *Sunnah*. Sa'd says: 'On this occasion, I was present when this occured before the Holy Prophet ﷺ . So, following that, the practice became common that they should be separated after which the two should never be united. (Abū Dāwūd)

In this *ḥadīth*, it is proved with full clarity that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has enforced the three simultanously-pronounced ṭalāqs of Sayyidnā 'Uwaymir ruling these as three.

And in the previous report of Maḥmud ibn Labīd as well, as corroborated by the report of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī, it is mentioned that three talaqs were enforced but, even if this was not so, at least this much is not reported anywhere that the Holy Prophet ﷺ ruled it to be one revocable divorce pronouncement, and allowed the husband to retain his wife.

To sum up, the three *aḥādīth* under reference prove that, despite the fact of three simultaneous talaqs which invited the extreme anger

of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their consequence, in any case, was that all three talaqs were ruled effective.

The action taken by Sayyidnā Fārūq Al-A'ẓam:

Now the above discussion proves this much that holding three talaqs as three was a decision of the Holy Prophet himself ﷺ. However, at this point, an incident related to Sayyidnā Fārūq Al-A'ẓam رضی الله عنه, which has been reported in Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim and several other books of *Ḥadith*, raises a problem. The words are:

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال : كان الطلاق على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأبى بكر و سنتين من خلافة عمر طلاق الثلث واحدة فقال عمر بن الخطاب: إن الناس قداستعجلوا فى أمر كانت لهم فيه أناة فلوأمضينا عليهم ، فأمضاه عليهم (صحيح مسلم ج ١ ص ٤٧٧)

It has been reported from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنهما that during the times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and during the first two years of the caliphate of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه three talāqs were taken as one. So, Sayyidnā 'Umar said: 'People are becoming haste-prone in a matter in which there was a room for deferment for them. Therefore, it would be appropriate if we enforce it on them.' Then he enforced it on them. (Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim, page 477, volume 1)

This declaration of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq was made publicly in the presence of *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) and *Tābi'in* (their successors) -- after consultation with *Ṣaḥābah* having expertise in *Fiqh*. Rejection or hesitation by any one of them has not been reported. Therefore, Imām Ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Māliki has reported a consensus on this; the following words appear in al-Zurqāni Sharḥ al-Mu'attā:

والجمهور على وقوع الثلاث بل حكى ابن عبدالبر الإجماع قائلا: ان خلافه لايلتفت إليه ، (زرقانى شرح مؤطا ج ٣ ص ١٦٧)

The overwhelming majority of the scholars of Shari'ah is of the view that three simultaneous talaqs become effective. In fact, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, while reporting *ijmā'* (consensus) on this, has said: 'The contrary of this is not worth consideration.' (al-Zurqāni: Sharḥ al-Mu'attā: page 167, v.3)

And Al-Nawawi says in Sharḥ Muslim:

قال الشافعى و مالك و أبو حنيفة وأحمد وجماهير العلماء من السلف والخلف يقع الثلاث ، وقال طاؤس وبعض أهل الظاهر: لايقع بذلك إلا واحدة (شرح مسلم ج ١ ص ٤٧٨)

Imām al-Shāfi'i, Imām Mālik, Imām Abū Hanifah, Imām Ahmad and a large number of earlier and later *'ulamā'* have said that three talaqs do become effective. And Tāw'ūs and some Zāhirī adherents have said what becomes effective with this is one *ṭalāq* only. (Sharḥ Muslim, page 475, volume 1)

Imām al-Tahāwī says in Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Athār:

فخاطب عمر رضى الله عنه بذلك الناس جميعا ، وفيهم أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، رضى الله عنهم الذين قد علموا ما تقدم من ذلك فى زمن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فلم ينكر عليه منهم منكر ولم يدفعه دافع . (شرح معانى الاثارج ٢ ص ٢٩)

So, Sayyidnā 'Umar addressed people on this subject publicly, and present among those were Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who knew about the method practiced prior to this during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But no one from among them challenged it and no one from among them rejected it. (Sharḥ al-Ma'ānī p. 29, v.2)

In the event cited above, no doubt, the course of action for the Muslim community has been laid down with the consensus of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'in*, warning that giving three talaqs simultaneously is certainly a cause of the anger of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and therefore undesirable, but despite this, anyone who commits this mistake will end up finding that his wife has become unlawful for him, and thereafter, not to become lawful again, unless she goes through the process of marrige and divorce with another man.

Intellectually and theoretically, two questions arise here. First: As stated earlier with the support of several *ḥadith* reports, it stands proved that the Holy Prophet has himself enforced three talaqs on those who gave three talaqs simultaneously. They were not permitted by him to revoke the divorce pronouncements or enter into a fresh marriage contract. What would then be the meaning of what Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said in relation to this incident, that is, during the times of the Prophet, during the Siddiqī caliphate, and upto to two

years, during the Fārūqī caliphate, three ṭalāqs were taken as one when Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam gave the ruling about three ṭalāqs.

The second question is that if it is accepted that three ṭalāqs were taken as one during the times of the Holy Prophet and the Siddiqi caliphate, how it was that Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضی الله عنه changed this decision? And even if, supposedly, a mistake was made by him, how did all the *Ṣaḥābah* present there accept it?

Both these questions have been answered variously by respected *fuqahā'* and *muhaddithīn*. The most clear and unburdened answer given is the one by Imam Nawawi which he has reported in *Sharh* Muslim calling it 'the most authentic (اصح)' suggesting that this executive order of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam and the total agreement (اجماع) of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* upon it, should be related to a particular form of three ṭalāqs in which someone might say three times: 'You are divorced, you are divorced, you are divorced' -- or he might say: 'I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you'.

This situation, meaning-wise, has two possibilities. (1) The pronouncer may have said these words with the intention of giving three ṭalāqs. (2) The three repeated pronouncements were simply for the sake of emphasis without any intention of giving three ṭalāqs, and it is obvious that the knowledge of intention can come only through the statement of the pronouncer. During the blessed times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ truth and honesty were common and dominant. If, after using such words, someone stated that he did not intend to give three ṭalāqs, instead, the words were said repeatedly just for the sake of emphasis, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would then confirm his sworn statement and rule that this was only one ṭalāq.

This is corroborated by the *ḥadīth* of Sayyidnā Rukāna رضی الله عنه which says that he had divorced his wife with the word, '*albattah*'. This word was spoken for three ṭalāqs in common Arab usage but the sense of three was not clear in it. Sayyidnā Rukāna رضی الله عنه said: 'I never intended three ṭalāqs with this word. In fact, I wanted to give one ṭalāq'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ put him on oath to which he swore. Then, he ruled it to be only one ṭalāq.

This *ḥadīth* appears in al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Majah and al-Dārimi with different chains of authorities and in different words. Some of the words also indicate that Sayyidnā Rukāna رضی الله عنه had given three ṭalāqs to his wife. But, Abū Dāwūd has preferred the position that Sayyidnā Rukāna, in reality, had given ṭalāq by using the

word '*albattah*' (البتة). Since this word was used for three ṭalāqs in common usage, some narrator has interpreted it as three ṭalāqs.

In any case, this *ḥadīth* proves, as generally agreed upon, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ ruled Sayyidnā Rukāna's ṭalāq to be one only when he declared on oath that he did not intend to give three ṭalāqs. This too, indeed, proves that he had not pronounced the words of three ṭalāqs explicitly and clearly, otherwise there would have remained no possibility of his having not intended three ṭalāqs and consequently, there would have been no need to question him.

The incident clarifies that if the words of ṭalāq had two possibilities about whether the husband had actually intended to give three ṭalāqs or he had used the words of divorce thrice just for the sake of emphasis, and had actually intended to give one ṭalāq only, the Holy Prophet ﷺ ruled only after a solemn declaration under oath, that it was one because those were the days of truth and honesty and the chance that someone would take a false oath was far too remote.

This practice continued during the caliphate of Sayyidnā Siddīq al-Akbar and during the first two years of the caliphate of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓām. It was during his time that Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓām realized that the standard of truth and honesty was on the decline now, and according to the prophecy made in *ḥadīth* will further decline in the future. On the other hand, incidents became numerous wherein those who pronounced the words of divorce three times started declaring that their intention was that of one ṭalāq only. It was then realized that should the practice of ruling (three ṭalāqs as) one ṭalāq following confirmation of the statement of intent by the pronouncer of ṭalāq continue like this into the future, it will not be too far when people start misusing this concession given by the Sharī'ah and go about lying that their intention was for one ṭalāq just to take a wife back. All *Ṣaḥābah*, finding the intelligence and far-sightedness of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓām in the management of religion (*dīn*) as correct, agreed with him. These were blessed people who knew the thinking of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They came to the conclusion that, should he be present in their particular time, surely he too, would not rule on the basis of the intention hidden in hearts and on the statement given by the person concerned. Therefore, the law he made

for this purpose declared that whosoever repeats the word of *ṭalāq* three times will find his very three ṭalāqs ruled as effective. His contention -- that he had intended to give only one *ṭalāq* -- would not be considered (in the courts) as valid.

In the foregoing incident related to Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam, the words of the report themselves confirm the subject under discussion. He said:

إن الناس قداستعجلوا فی أمر کانت لهم فيه اناة فلوأمضينا عليهم

> People are becoming haste-prone in a matter in which there was a room for deferment for them. Therefore, it would be appropriate if we enforce it on them.

This explanation of the executive order of Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓām رضی اللہ عنہ, and the consensus of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* on it, is confirmed by *Ḥadīth* reports as well. It automatically supplies answers to the two questions referred to above.

The problem is resolved as we know that a particular *ṭalāq* (divorce) given by the word 'three', or the repetition of the word *ṭalāq* with the intention of 'three', were ruled as three after all -- even during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The ruling of 'one' concerns a *ṭalāq* in which *thalāth* or 'three' is not mentioned clearly or in which the act of giving three talaqs is not admitted and instead, it is claimed that the count of three was for emphasis only.

Then the other question -- when the Holy Prophet ﷺ had already ruled three divorce prnouncements to be one, why did Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ act otherwise and how did the noble Companion agree with it? -- is also eliminated because, in this particular situation, Sayyidnā 'Umar has blocked the indiscriminate use of the leave given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. God forbid, there is no trace of doubt here about any decision of the Holy Prophet ﷺ having been reversed.

Now that all doubts have been removed, let Allah be praised. The purpose here does not warrant going into comprehensive and exhaustive details on the subject of three talaqs. That appears in extensive details in *Ḥadīth* commentaries and several *'ulamā* have explained it in detailed treatises. Here, this much is sufficient to understand the subject. And Allah is our supporter and helper.

Verses 231 - 232

وَاِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ
سَرِّحُوْهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ وَّلَا تُمْسِكُوْهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوْا ۚ وَمَنْ
يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ هُزُوًا ز
وَّاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ
وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيْمٌ O وَاِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ اَنْ
يَّنْكِحْنَ اَزْوَاجَهُنَّ اِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ يُوْعَظُ بِهٖ
مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ اَزْكٰى لَكُمْ
وَاَطْهَرُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ O

And when you have divorced women, and they have reached (the end of) their waiting period, then, either retain them as recognized or release them as recognized. And do not retain them with wrongful intent resulting in cruelty on your part. And whoever does this actually wrongs his own self. And do not take the verses of Allah in jest, and remember the grace of Allah on you and what He has revealed to you of the Book and the wisdom giving you good counsel thereby. And fear Allah, and be sure that Allah is all-knowing in respect of everything.

And when you have divorced women and they have reached (the end of) their waiting period, do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they mutually agree as recognized. This is how advice is given, to one of you who believes in Allah and in the Hereafter. This is more pure and clean for you. And Allah knows and you do not know. (Verses 231 - 232)

Commentary:

In the previous two verses, it will be recalled, important rules of the law of *ṭalāq* (divorce) were given. Also delienated there was the just and moderate system of divorce in Islam. Now some other relevant injunctions and rulings have been mentioned in the verses under discussion (231 - 232).

Special instructions for revocation of divorce or annulment of marriage

The first rule given in the first verse is: When women divorced revocably reach near the completion of their *'iddah* (waiting period), the husband has two choices; either he may revoke his divorce and let her continue to be married to him or he may not revoke his divorce, discontinue the *nikāh* relationship and release her totally.

But along with both these choices, the noble Qur'ān places a restriction which requires that a wife, if retained, must be retained in accordance with a manner well-recognized and should it come to a parting of ways, even then, the parting should be in accordance with the rule as approved by the Sharī'ah. Here, the word بِالْمَعْرُوفِ (in fairness), which appears separately at both the places, suggests that there are some conditions and rules governing the choice of retaining, similarly as there are, in the choice of releasing. When choice is made from either of the two options, it must be done in accordance with the method prescribed by the Sharī'ah and not under the heat of spot anger or sentiments. Some of these rules of Islamic law appear in the Qur'ān itself. Rest of the details have been given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

For instance, should the thought of ugly consequences of separation after the incident of divorce produce a change of heart in favour of revoking it and keeping the marriage intact, then the Sharī'ah has a method. It stipulates that the purpose in doing so should be to wash out past anger and displeasure and resolve to live anew in good family relationship with intention to give her the due rights. The purpose should not be to hold the woman in captivity or to harass and torture her. Therefore, the following words were said in the verse under reference: وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا, that is, 'do not retain them with intent to harm them unjustly'.

The other method of *raj'ah* (revocation) has been mentioned in Sūrah Al-Ṭalāq:

وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوَيْ عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ

> And let two trustworthy persons from amongst you be witnesses; then, let witness be given if needed, precisely for the sake of Allah, (without fear or favour). (65:2)

It means that anyone intending to take his wife back by *raj'ah* (revocation) should invite two trustworthy Muslims to act as witnesses. Out of the many advantages it has, one is the possible use of these witnesses in case there is a legal claim against *raj'ah* filed by the woman.

Moreover, if the rule of having witnesses on *raj'ah* is not observed there is a possibility that someone, out of selfishness or Satanic instigation, comes up with a claim, even after the *'iddah* has expired, that he had already done his *raj'ah* (revocation) before the expiry of *'iddah* (waiting period).

In order to eradicate these evils, the Holy Qur'ān has directed that the act of revocation should have two trustworthy witnesses.

Looking at the other side of the matter, it is also possible that hearts remain heavy and anger does not go away even after the long span of *'iddah* which has given them sufficient time for thinking. So, a termination of relationship may seem to be the choice, in which case the danger of hostile emotions flaring up is acute, which again may become contagious -- starting from two persons, it could envelope two families and could become, for both, a danger for both this world and the Hereafter. To offset this danger, it was briefly said: أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ : 'Or release them in fairness,' that is, if you have to leave or free a wife and sever your relationship with her, that too, must be done in accordance with the recognised method. Some details of this method are given in the noble Qur'ān itself; rest of the details stand proved through what the Holy Prophet ﷺ said and did.

For instance, in the preceding verse, it was said: وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا that is, do not take back (without a valid ground admitted by the Islamic Law) that which you have already given to the woman as *mahr* (dower), in return for the divorce, or go about demanding some other compensation.

Then, in the following verse, it was said: وَلِلْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ , that is, 'for all divorced women, there is some benefit as recognized rightly due on those who fear Allah'. The explanation of مَتَاعٌ : *matā'* or compensatory benefit to be given to a divorced wife is that she should be given some present or cash or a set of clothing at the least. Thus the fulfillment of some rights of the divorced wife has been made

mandatory for the divorcing husband while the fulfillment of some others has been assigned to him in the form of kind treatment and good conduct. This is a chaste lesson in high morals and social manners which points to the fact that, just as the marriage was a transaction and mutual contract, the divorce is the termination of a transaction. There is no reason why the termination of this transaction should be a hotbed of enmity and hostility. The final annulment of the transaction should also be done decently and compassionately, that is, following *talaq*, the divorced wife should be given some benefits.

The details of this 'benefit' are that he should allow her to stay in the family house during *'iddah*, pay for her total sustenance, pay the full amount of *mahr* (dower) if still unpaid while intercourse has already occurred; and in case the incident of divorce has occurred before intercourse, then half of the dower should be paid in good cheer. All these are obligatory rights which have to be given to a divorced woman necessarily; however, it is not only desirable but excellent as well, if the divorced wife, on her parting day, goes with some cash or at the least, with a set of clothing as parting gift. *Ṣubḥān Allāh,* what a decent teaching it is -- all that customarily causes quarrels and fights and takes families to ruin has been so wisely transformed into everlasting goodwill and peace.

After all these injunctions, it was said: وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ, that is, anyone who acts against these divine commands will harm none but himself. It is obvious that Hereafter (the life to come) will be the place where every injustice and cruelty will be avenged in the sight of Allah and the oppressor is not going to move one step forward unless the oppressed is avenged.

If we ponder with discernment and hindsight, we shall discover that, if some oppressor gets away with his cruelty against the oppressed, the evil consequences of this act do disgrace him, more than often, right here in this world. He may or may not comprehend it, but fairly often, he is overtaken by misfortunes which make him taste at least some retribution of his oppression during his life of the mortal world. This is what Shaykh Sa'dī, mercy be on him, said in a Persian couplet:

پنداشت ستمگر کہ جفا برما کرد
برگردنِ وے بماند وبرما بگذشت

The oppressor presumed that he had hit me.
But his weapon boomeranged back into his neck while it sailed past me!

The noble Qur'ān has an approach which is wise, and a style that is special, when it does not describe law in the manner penal laws of the world are described. It rather explains its injunctions in a sympathetic and persuasive manner, showing its wisdom and describing the series of losses man suffers while acting against it, which, if duly understood, will render one incapable of embarking on such crimes. So, behind every law there comes the reminder that man must fear Allah and that man should never forget his accountability in the Hereafter.

Do not make a marriage and divorce a plaything

The second rule presented in this verse is that the word of Allah should not be taken lightly as some amusement: ولا تتخذوا آيات الله هزوا : 'And do not take the verses of Allah in jest.' According to one explanation of the expression -- playing games with the verses of Allah or making a mockery of it -- means acting against Divine ordinances in matters of marriage and divorce. The second explanation reported from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضی الله عنه is that some people during pre-Islam Arabia would give divorce or free a slave, then they would go back on their word and start saying that this was all in fun; *ṭalāq* (divorce) or *'itāq* (to free a slave) was not intended. Thereupon, this verse was revealed which gave the ruling that anyone going through divorce and marriage, even if it be playfully or jokingly, would find these enforced and the plea of 'having no intention' will not be accepted as valid.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that there are three things in which acting seriously, or in jest, are both equal: One -- *ṭalāq* (divorce); two - *'itāq* (to free a slave); three -- *nikāh* (marriage) (reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn al-'Abbas and Ibn al-Mundhir from 'Ubadah ibn al-Samit).

This *ḥadīth* has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah in the following words:

ثلاث جدّهن جدّ وهزلهن جدّ: النكاح والطلاق والرجعة

It means that there are three things which take effect equally whether done seriously or jokingly. These are: The marriage, the divorce and the revocation of divorce. (Mazhari)

The Islamic law governing these three is: Should a man and a woman go through the process of offer and acceptance before witnesses, even if it be without any intention or just in jest, the marriage stands solemnized anyway. Similarly, if divorce is given in clear words, without any intention, or just in jest, divorce takes effect; or revocation, if done, becomes valid too. Similarly again, if a slave is playfully declared to be free, the slave becomes free. Jest or fun are not taken as valid excuses.

After stating this injunction, the noble Qur'ān then educates man, in its unique style, how he should obey Allah Almighty and fear the consequences of the life to come (*ākhirah*). It was said:

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ O

That is, 'And remember the grace of Allah on you and what He has revealed to you of the Book and the wisdom giving you good counsel thereby. And fear Allah, and be sure that Allah is all-knowing in respect of everything' -- It means: He knows the secrets hidden in your hearts, your intentions and your purposes. Therefore, when you have to release your wife from your marriage bond by giving divorce, you should do so with the intention of avoiding mutual disputes, loss of mutual rights and doing injustice, and not with the intention of releasing anger on your wife or disgracing or hurting her.

The basic rules of giving a divorce

The third rule identified in this verse is: Should a man be left with no other option but divorce, then the basic and true method in the view of Sharī'ah and *Sunnah* is that he should give one revocable divorce in clear and unambiguous words so that the choice of taking the wife back remains open. Words that cause sudden severance of marriage relationship should not be spoken. This is known as *al-ṭalāq al-bā'in*, the divorce that cannot be revoked. In addition to this, reaching three talaqs must be avoided following which even fresh marriage between the couple becomes *ḥaram* (unlawful). This point is indicated by the use of the universal and unqualified words in طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ

(when you have divorced women), because the injunction contained in this verse covers only one or two revocable ṭalāqs. It does not concern the irrevocable three talaqs; but the Holy Qur'ān, by not mentioning any related qualification, has suggested that the real *ṭalāq* (divorce) is none other than the revocable *ṭalāq* as approved by the Sharī'ah. Other forms are not devoid of repugnance or undesirability.

Rules of the remarriage of the divorced women

The second verse stops the unjust treatment meted out to divorced women, that is, they are discouraged to marry again. In some cases the first husband generally opposes the idea of his divorced wife marrying someone else and considers this to be a violation of his honour. In some families, even guardians of the divorced woman stop her from marrying a second time -- some of them often do that out of greed hoping to let her marry only when there is some financial gain for them. There are times when the divorced woman agrees to remarry her former husband but the guardians and relatives develop a sort of hostility towards him after the incident of divorce. As such, they oppose their remarriage even after both of them agree to it. Stopping free women, without any valid reason admitted by Islamic law, from marrying at their choice, is a grave injustice whether it comes from the former husband or from the guardians of the woman. This injustice has been prevented through this verse.

This verse was revealed in the background of an incident of this nature. It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Ma'qil ibn Yasār رضى الله عنه had given his sister in marriage to someone. He divorced her and the period of *'iddah* expired as well. Following that, this man was sorry for what he did and wished to remarry her. His wife, that is, the sister of Ma'qil ibn Yasār رضى الله عنه also agreed to it. When this man talked to Ma'qil about it, he said, of course, in anger against the man's act of divorce: 'I did you an honour. I gave you the hand of my sister and you did this to me. You divorced her. Now you have come again to me so that I can let you marry her once again. By Allah, she will not go back in your *nikāh* now.'

There was another incident concerning a cousin of Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه similar to the one above. Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which the approach of Ma'qil and Jābir رضى الله عنهما was declared to be undesirable and impermissible.

The noble *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) were true lovers of Allah Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ . Such was the beneficence of the verse that Ma'qil ibn Yasār's anger cooled down as he heard it. He himself went to his former brother-in-law and gave his sister in his marriage once again and then gave *kaffārah* (expiation) for his oath. Similarly, Jābir also carried out the instruction.

Keeping in view the form of address used here, this verse includes husbands who have given a divorce as well as the guardians of the women. Both have been commanded: فَلَا تَعۡضُلُوۡهُنَّ اَنۡ يَّنۡكِحۡنَ اَزۡوَاجَهُنَّ اِذَا تَرَاضَوۡا بَيۡنَهُمۡ بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ: that is, 'do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they mutually agree with fairness.' They may even be their previous husbands who had divorced them or they may be others. But a condition has been imposed here which is: اِذَا تَرَاضَوۡا بَيۡنَهُمۡ بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ , that is, 'when they mutually agree with fairness.' It means: When a man and woman agree to marry in accordance with the rules set by the Sharī'ah, then, do not stop them from getting married. Here it was hinted that the absence of an agreement between the two, or compulsion from any quarter, is a valid reason for people around to stop them. Or, it may be that there is mutual agreement of the couple but it is not in accordance with the method prescribed by the Shari'ah. For instance, the couple may agree to live together without marrying; or may, in between them, enter into a new *nikāh* illegitimately after three talaqs. Still more, should there be an intention to marry another husband during the period of *'iddah*, every Muslim, specially those closely related to the man and woman concerned, have a right to stop them from doing so. In fact, it is *wājib* or obligatory to stop them within the limits of one's ability.

Similarly, if a girl wishes to marry outside her *kaf'*(كفو : equal, like) without the permission of her guardians, or wishes to enter into *nikāh* (marriage) on a dower which is less than her *mahr al-mithl* (a dower approximately similar to the one customary in her family) then this affects the family. Since she has no right to do this, her consent is also not in accordance with the method prescribed by the Sharī'ah. In this situation, the guardians of the girl have a right to stop her from this

marriage. However, the words إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا :'When they mutually agree' do point out that a sane and pubert girl cannot be given in marriage without her consent or permission.

Towards the end of verse 232 there are three sentences appearing one after the other. The first one is: ذٰلِكَ يُوْعَظُ بِهٖ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ : It means: 'These injunctions are for those who believe in Allah and the Last Day.' Here it was hinted that the necessary outcome of believing in Allah and the Last Day, (the Day of Judgment) is that man should observe, practice and be bound by these Divine injunctions *in toto.* Those who fall short in following these injunctions should realize that their *'Īmān* or belief is in disarray.

In the second sentence, it was said: ذٰلِكُمْ أَزْكٰى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ , that is, 'adherence to these injunctions is for you a modality of purity and cleanliness.' It has been suggested here that the result of acting contrary to these injunctions is defilement with the pollution of sin, and involvement in discord and strife; for instance, if sane, pubert and young girls were categorically prevented from marriage, it would, on one hand, be an act of cruelty to them and a denial of their rights and on the other, this would put their modesty and chastity in danger. Thirdly, if God forbid, they get involved in sin, the resulting curse will also fall on those who prevented them from marrying. And it is quite possible that, much before the curse of the life to come (the *ākhirah*), the misfortune of these helpless women may drive men to the outside limits of wars and murders, as is not uncommon even now. If that happens, much before the curse of the *ākhirah*, their deeds will become a curse for them right here in this world. And if they were not, categorically at least, prevented from marriage, but were forced to enter into marriage with a person not of their choice and liking, that too will result in perpetual hostility, discord and strife, or *talaq* (divorce) and *khul'* (خلع : Divorce at the instance of wife against compensation). Its unpleasant effects are obvious. It was, therefore, said that in not preventing them from marrying the husbands of their choice there is for you easy access to purity and cleanliness.

In the third sentence it was said: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ , that is, 'and Allah knows (that which is good for you) and you do not know'. The purpose of this statement is that people who prevent divorced women

from marrying see some benefits coming to them according to their conjecture, for instance, the notion of retaining honour and prestige or the hope of extracting some money on the pretext of their marriage. In order to remove this Satanic deception and unjust expediency, it was said: Allah Almighty knows very well what is suitable or beneficial for you -- so, when injunctions are given, these considerations are already taken care of. Since you do not know the reality of things and the end of affairs, you go ahead with your imperfect thoughts and faulty opinions, taking such things to be suitable or beneficial at times, while in them there is nothing but ruin and destruction for you. The assumed honour and prestige that you uphold will be rolling in dust if divorced women were to go out of control. And when you think of illegitimate monetary gains, it is likely that these may get you involved in intrigues and conflicts which may become dangerous not only for your money but also for your life.

The Qur'ānic strategy about the enforcement of a law

At this point here, the Holy Qur'ān presents a law to the effect that preventing divorced women from marrying as they choose is prohibited. Now, in order that acting in accordance with this law becomes easy, and that a climate of acceptance is generated in the public mind, these three sentences have followed after the initial declaration of the law. In the first sentence man is induced to be ready for action in accordance with this law by warning him against the accountability of the Day of Judgment and the subsequent punishment of crimes. In the second sentence, man is persuaded to abide by the law by telling him about evils caused by acting against it and many a harm that such contravention may bring to humanity. In the third sentence it was said that your own betterment lies in abiding by the law given by Allah Almighty. If, in acting against it, you have some expedient gain in mind, that then, is an outcome of your short-sightedness and insensitivity to consequences.

This manner and style of the Holy Qur'ān does not end here; in fact, it runs throughout all injunctions. When a law is identified, along with it comes the warning that Allah is Almighty and that there is accountability and punishment in the Hereafter. With the beginning and the end of each law there are affixes and suffixes like اِتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ (Fear

Allah) and إِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (Allah is All-Aware of what you do) and إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (Allah is watchful of what you do). The Qur'ān is, for the whole world, and for the generations to come till the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*), a complete code of life, and a law covering all aspects of living. Of course, it does describe restrictive ordinances and legal punishments, but the manner in which these are handled is unique, not to be found in the law books of the whole world. The diction it has is more sympathetic than authoritarian. In the description of each law, there is an objective approach that no man should, by disobeying it, become deserving of punishment. This is not something like the governments of the contemporary world which make a law, publish it and then anyone who acts against it is left out to go through his punishment.

Moreover, a rather long-term benefit that comes out of this method of Qur'ān and its special style, is that man, once he has sensed it, does not start abiding by the law simply because he knows that acting against it would bring some sort of punishment in the mortal world; much contrary to this, he starts worrying about the displeasure of Allah Almighty and the punishment that would come in the Hereafter (*ākhirah*) and this very concern of his renders his outside and inside, his open and his secret, all even -- one and indivisible. He cannot act against the law even at a place where there are no chances at all of his being policed, openly or secretly, because he believes that Allah Almighty, great is His Majesty, is present everywhere, watching and knowing everything down to the minutest particle. This is the reason why every Muslim abided by the law considering it to be an ideal of his life as a result of the principles of clean social living taught by the Qur'ān.

Aside from identifying limits and restrictions of law, the distinction of a Qur'ānic system of government is that by using the tools of persuasion and warning, it raises the standards of human morals and character to heights where legal limits and restrictions become second nature to him, before which he makes his personal desires and preferences take the back seat. A hard look into the history and governments of nations and the roster of crimes and punishments they offer would show that law alone has never reformed

any nation or individual. The police and the army alone have never succeeded in rooting crimes out unless the fear of Allah Almighty and the realization of His supreme greatness is impinged on human hearts. That which helps prevent crimes is, in reality, the fear of Allah and the fear of accountability on the Day of Judgment. If this is not there, nobody can keep anybody away from crimes.

Verse 233

وَالْوَالِدٰتُ يُرْضِعْنَ اَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ
الرَّضَاعَةَ ؕ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُوْدِ لَهٗ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ
لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌ ۢ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا
مَوْلُوْدٌ لَّهٗ بِوَلَدِهٖ ۗ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذٰلِكَ ۚ فَاِنْ اَرَادَا فِصَالًا
عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا ؕ وَاِنْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ
تَسْتَرْضِعُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَّآ اٰتَيْتُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ O

And mothers suckle their children full two years; it is for one who wants to complete the (period of) suckling. And on him, to whom the child is born, falls the provision of food and clothing for them (the mothers) with fairness. Nobody is obligated beyond his capacity. No mother shall be made to suffer on account of her child, nor a man to whom the child is born, on account of his child. And on the heir it falls likewise. Now, if they want to wean, with mutual consent, and consulation, there is no sin on them. And if you want to get your children suckled (by a wet-nurse), there is no sin on you when you pay off what you are to give, as recognized. And fear Allah and be sure that Allah is watchful of what you do. (Verse 233)

The injunctions of suckling the children by the mothers

This verse contains injunctions relating to *raḍā'ah* (رضاعة) or the suckling of children. It will be recalled that in verses appearing earlier and later than this, the injunctions of *ṭalāq* (divorce) have been taken up. In between, there appear injunctions relating to the suckling of

children, because it generally happens that issues concerning the feeding and upbringing of children are disputed following a divorce. Since these disputations lead to violence, this verse offers moderate injunctions which can be carried out easily and appropriately by man and woman both. For the two situations of suckling and weaning, whether these show up during the period of marriage, or after divorce, a system was suggested which helps stop mutual bickering, or injustice to any of the parties.

For instance, it was said in the first sentence of the verse:

وَالْوَالِدٰتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُّتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ

that is, 'And mothers suckle their children for full two years' -- unless there be some strong compelling reason which leads to weaning before that time.

Some rules concerning *raḍāʻah* or suckling of children come out from this verse; these are:

Suckling of children is an obligation of the mother

Naturally suckling is an obligation of the mother. If she does not feed without a valid reason or because of some hostility or displeasure, she will be a sinner. And she cannot accept any payment for suckling from her husband, as long as she is married to him because that is her own duty.

The total period of suckling

The second rule is about the total period of suckling which is two years. Unless there be some special reason, it is the right of the child that this period be completed.

From this we also know that the total time given for suckling is full two years after which suckling should not be done. However, on the basis of some verses of the Qur'ān and reports from *aḥādīth*, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ruled that if it was carried on over a period of 30 months or two and a half years, all the legal effects of suckling shall be applicable and if this was done because of the weakness of the child, a legitimate excuse, it would then be no sin either. But breast-feeding a child after completing two and a half years is unanimously *ḥaram* (forbidden).

In the second sentence of this verse, it was said:

وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُوْدِلَهٗ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

And on him, to whom the child is born, falls the provision of food and clothing for them (the mothers) with fairness. Nobody is obligated beyond his capacity.

The first point that must be noted here is that the Qur'an uses the word وَالِدٰت for mothers but while referring to the father, it opts for اَلْمَوْلُوْدُلَهٗ : 'to whom the child is born' leaving out the smaller word والد , although the said word, *'walid'* (father) does appear elsewhere in the Qur'an, for instance: لَايَجْزِىْ وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَّلَدِهٖ : '(Fear the Day) when no father shall be of avail to his child' (31:33). But the use of *al-mawludi lahu* in place of *walid* in this setting has a secret behind it. The whole of Qur'an has a unique method and style so it does not describe any law in the way governments of the mortal world do. It rather presents it in a sympathetic and affectionate manner, a manner in which it could become easy for human beings to accept it and act accordingly.

Since the father has been obligated to pay for the expenses of the child, even though the child belongs to the father and the mother both, it was possible that the father could take this injunction to be somewhat burdensome, therefore, the expression *al-mawludi lahu* ('tc whom the child is born') was preferred over *walid* ('father'). The meaning of this expression -- 'to whom the child is born' -- suggests that, no doubt both father and mother share in the birth of the child, but the child is, however, ascribed to the father. The lineage comes from the father. Now that the child is his, the responsibility of the child's expenses should not be heavy on him.

Responsibilities of mothers and fathers

The third rule of Islamic law given in this verse is: While suckling the child is certainly the responsibility of the mother but the sustenance of the mother, inclusive of all necessities of life, is the responsibility of the father and this responsibility continues as far as the marriage or the post-divorce waiting period of wife (*'iddah*) continues. When divorce and *'iddah* have matured, the responsibility of the husband towards the expenses of his wife will end, but the father will con tinue to be obligated to pay for the suckling of the child. (Mazhari)

The standard of wife's liabilities

When the husband and wife are both affluent, matching expenses will be obligatory. When both are poor, correspondingly matching expenses will be obligatory. On this much there is total agreement. However, the Muslim jurists differ if both have a different financial status. Following al-Khassāf, the author of Hidāyah has ruled that should the woman be poor and the man rich, her expenses will be medial, that is, higher than those of the poor and lower than those of the rich. According to al-Karkhī, the status of the husband will be the criterion. In Fath al-Qadīr, *fatwā* has been reported on this position from many jurists. (Fath al-Qadīr, pp 422, v.3)

In the verse under discussion, after stating injunctions, the Qur'ān says: لَا تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌۢ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ لَّهٗ بِوَلَدِهٖ , that is, 'no mother shall be made to suffer on account of her child, nor a man to whom the child is born, on account of his child.' It means that the father and mother of the child should not stonewall each other. For instance, the mother may be unable to suckle the child due to some excuse but the father may start forcing her to do so, hoping that she being the mother of the child, would finally melt down and suckle the child. Or, take the case of a mother who has no excuse, yet she refuses to suckle the child hoping that the poor husband, being the father of the child would, in one way or the other, find the means to have the child suckled elsewhere.

Forcing or not forcing a mother for suckling

The fifth rule deduced from لَا تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌۢ بِوَلَدِهَا (No mother shall be made to suffer on account of her child) appearing above is that it is not permissible for the father to compel the mother to suckle the child if she refuses to do so under some excuse, or need. And if the child refuses to be suckled by another woman, or also refuses to feed on any milk other than that of his or her mother, the mother will then be compelled to feed the child. This rule we know from وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ لَّهٗ بِوَلَدِهٖ (nor a man to whom the child is born, on account of his child).

Wages of suckling for a divorced woman

The sixth rule that we learn about is: If the mother demands wages to suckle, she has no right to do that as long as she is married to her husband or is within the post-divorce waiting period. Here her maintenance, which is the responsibility of the child's father, is

enough in itself. Asking for additional wages amounts to harming the father. The situation changes if the post-divorce waiting period has expired and the responsibility of maintenance is all over. Now, if this divorced woman demands from the father wages to suckle her child, the father will have to pay it -- since not doing so amounts to a loss to the mother. However, the condition is that she should ask for the same amount of wages as is taken by some other woman. If she asks for more, the father will have the right to engage a wet-nurse to suckle the child in her place.

The responsibility of suckling an orphan

Later in the subject verse, it is said: وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذٰلِكَ . It means: If the father is not alive, the responsibility for arranging to have the child suckled falls on the person who is the legal heir (*wārith*) of the child and a *maḥram* (person with whom marriage is prohibited for ever); that is, those who are entitled to be inheritors of the child, if he dies, would be the ones responsible for his sustenance in the absence of the father. If, there be more than one heir like him, everyone will share that responsibility in proportion to their share in the inheritance. Imām Abū Ḥanifah explained that assigning the responsibility of having the orphaned child suckled to the heirs also tells us that the sustenance of a minor child will continue to be, even after weaning, a charge of the heirs since there is nothing special about milk, the purpose is to have the expenses of the child covered. For instance, if the mother of the orphaned child and his grandfather are both alive, these two then, are his *maḥram*, and heirs as well. Therefore, the maintenance of the child shall be borne by both of them in proportion to their share in the inheritance, that is, the mother will bear one-third and the grandfather, two-thirds. Herefrom we also know that the right of the orphaned grandson on his grandfather is much stronger than the rights of his own adult sons, since he is not responsible for the sustenance of his adult child, while the sustenance of the orphaned grandson is obligatory on him. However, a grandson has not been given a share in inheritance in the presence of sons, because it is against the principle of inheritance and justice, as giving a share to the farther in presence of the nearer children is not rational in itself and is certainly, against the *ḥadith* لاولى رجل ذكر (for the nearest male) in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Nevertheless, the grandfather does have

the right to make some provision in his will for the orphaned grandson, if he feels there is need to do that. This will could even turn out to be higher than the share of sons. Thus the need of the orphaned grandson was taken care of, while at the same time, the principle of inheritance -- that in the presence of the nearer, the farther should not receive -- remained intact.

The injunctions of weaning

After that, it is said in the subject verse:

فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا

that is, if the mother and father of the child, after mutual consultation and agreement, decide that they have to wean the child earlier than two years, because of the inability of the mother or some sickness of the child, then there is no sin involved here as well. The condition of 'mutual consultation and agreement' was placed for the reason that in weaning the child, his or her welfare should be the paramount concern. Making the child a target-board of mutual differences and quarrels is undesirable.

Injunctions of suckling by a nurse

In the end, it is said:

وَإِنْ أَرَدتُّمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوٓا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَّآ اٰتَيْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

It means: If you wish, for some expedient reason, to have your children suckled by a wet-nurse in place of the mother, even then there is no sin in doing so. However, the condition is that the wages settled with the wet-nurse be paid in full. If the wages were not paid as settled, the sin thereof will rest with the parents.

From this we learn that should a father realize that the feed of the mother, who is willing to suckle, is not good for the child, he has the right to stop the mother from suckling and get a wet-nurse to do that.

From this we also learn that the wages or salary of the woman employed for suckling should be negotiated and settled clearly so that there is no dispute later on; and then let the settled wages be handed over to her at the appointed time and let there be no postponement or evasion.

After stating all these injunctions relating to *raḍāʻah* (suckling), the Qur'ān once again returns to its special manner and style whereby

it brings into focus the fear of Allah Almighty and the concept of His all-encompassing Knowledge so that acting in accordance with law becomes easy, and one remains bound by it under all conditions, seen or unseen. It is said: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ that is, 'keep fearing Allah and know for sure that Allah Almighty is fully watching over your open and secret, and your seen and unseen, and He is aware of all intents and purposes hidden in your hearts.' Any party that acts against these injunctions of suckling and weaning or takes a decision in this connection disregarding the welfare of the child, shall deserve punishment.

Verses 234-235

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُوْنَ اَزْوَاجًا يَّتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّعَشْرًا ۚ فَاِذَا بَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا فَعَلْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ۝ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاۗءِ اَوْ اَكْنَنْتُمْ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۭ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُوْنَهُنَّ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُوَاعِدُوْھُنَّ سِرًّا اِلَّآ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ڛ وَلَا تَعْزِمُوْا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتٰبُ اَجَلَهٗ ۭ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوْهُ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ۝

And those among you who pass away and leave wives behind, their wives keep themselves waiting for four months and ten days. So, when they have reached (the end of) their waiting period, there is no sin on you in what they do for themselves as recognized. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. There is no sin on you if you hint as a proposal to the women or conceal it in your hearts. Allah does know what you will mention to them. But do not make a promise to them secretly, except that you speak in a recognized manner. And do not resolve upon a contract of marriage until the prescribed time is reached. And be sure that Allah knows what is in your hearts. So, fear Him and be sure that Allah is most Forgiving, Forbearing. (Verse 234-235)

Some injunctions relating to *'Iddah*

1. For one whose husband dies, it is not correct to wear perfume or make-up or use *kohl* [52] or hair oil, beauty-treat unnecessarily, apply henna and dress gaudily. It is also not correct to talk about the second marriage in clear and unambiguous words as appears in the succeeding verse. In addition to this it is also incorrect to stay overnight in homes other than one's own. The text's "*yatarabbaṣna bi anfusihinna*" translated as "keep themselves waiting" hint towards these avoidances. And this is also the injunction for the woman who has received an irrevocable divorce, that is, in which revocation is not possible. However, it is not right for her to go out of the house even during the daytime unless there is an extreme compulsion.

2. Another rule most people are not aware of is: If the husband dies on the night of the new moon, these months will be completed in accordance with the lunar calendar. Their being of 29 or 30 days makes no difference. But, if he died after the night of the new moon, all these months will be completed as of 30 days each. In all, 130 days will be completed. And when this period expires, and the same time when the death occurred comes, *'iddah* will be over.

And now a word concerning what was said about women -- "There is no sin on you in what they do for themselves as recognized." This teaches us that it becomes obligatory on others to stop one who acts against the Sharī'ah, of course, if they have the ability or power to do so. Otherwise, these people too become sinners. And the expression, *bi l'ma'rūf* ('with fairness' or 'as recognized') means that the marriage solemnized should be correct, and permissible according to the Sharī'ah; all conditions of its being lawful should be observed.

Verses 236 - 237

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ مَالَمْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ اَوْ تَفْرِضُوْا
لَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ۖ وَّمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ ۚ عَلَى الْمُوْسِعِ قَدَرُهٗ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهٗ ۚ
مَتَاعًا ۢ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝ وَاِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ

52. *Surma*: collorium, claimed to be an inorganic lead compound -- 'Galena', which has been erroneously translated as 'Antimony' by Western writers. Since 'Antimony' is a known ingredient of modern sophisticated explosives, this age-old eye-cosmetic has gone out of fashion and favour.

قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَافَرَضْتُمْ
اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّعْفُوْنَ اَوْيَعْفُوَاالَّذِىْ بِيَدِهٖ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ ۚ وَاَنْ تَعْفُوْٓا
اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ۚ وَلَا تَنْسَوُا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ
بَصِيْرٌ O

There is no sin on you if you divorce women when you have not yet touched them nor fixed for them an amount. So, give them benefit, a rich man according to his means and a poor one according to his means -- a benefit in the recognized manner, an obligation on the virtuous. And if you divorce them before you have touched them, while you have already fixed for them an amount, then there is one half of what you have fixed, unless they (the women) forgive, or forgives the one in whose hand lies the marriage tie. And it is closer to *Taqwa* [53] that you forgive. And do not forget being graceful to one another. Surely, Allah is watchful of what you do. (Verses 236 - 237)

Commentary

Keeping dower and consummation in view, divorce can be of four situations. The injunction concerning the first two of these has been stated in these verses. (1) Dower is not fixed and consummation has not taken place. (2) Dower is fixed but consummation has not taken place. (3) Dower is fixed and consummation has taken place. Here the fixed dower will have to be paid in full. This injunction appears elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān. (4) Dower has not been pre-fixed but divorce was given after consummation. Here full *mahr al-mithl* (a dower as in the divorcees' family) will have to be paid. It means the amount of the dower will be the same as customarily given in the immediate family circle of the woman. This too has been taken up in yet another verse of the Holy Qur'ān.

The injunction related to the first two situations has been stated in the verses appearing here. Out of the two, the injunction for the first situation is: No dower is due but it is obligatory for the husband to

53. The sense of being responsible to Allah.

give something on his own to the woman -- the least being a set of clothes. In fact, the Holy Qur'ān has not fixed any amount for this gift. However, it does indicate that the affluent should give in accordance with their capacity, which carries an element of persuasion for the man of means who should not behave tight-fisted in this act of grace. Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضی اللہ عنہ , in a situation like this, gave a gift of twenty thousand *dirhams* to the divorced woman, and Qādī Shurayh, that of five hundred *dirhams*; and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said that the lowest degree here is to give one set of clothes. (Qurṭubī)

In the second situation, when the woman's dower has been fixed before marriage and divorce occurs before actual consummation, the injunction says that the man shall be obligated to pay half of the dower already fixed. However, should the woman forgive, or should the man pay the whole, this will be a matter of free choice, as is evident from the verse:

إِلَّآ أَن يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوَا الَّذِى بِيَدِهِۦ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ

Unless they (the women) forgive, or forgives the one in whose hand lies the marriage tie. (2:237)

The use of the word *ya'fū* ('forgives') to cover even the payment of full dower, perhaps, reflects the customary Arab practice of the payment of dower amount simultaneously with the marriage. If so, the husband has become, in the event of a pre-consummation divorce, deserving of taking half of the dower back. Now, if he yields voluntarily and does not take his half back, this too, would virtually be an act of forgiving. And the act of forgiving has been declared more merit-worthy, and closer to *Taqwā* (the sense of being responsible to Allah, commonly rendered as piety or fear or righteousness in absence of an exact equivalent); because this forgiveness symbolically indicates that the severance of the bond of marriage was also done with magnanimity and good grace, which is the objective of the Shari'ah and certainly, deserving of great merit -- the forgiveness could come from the woman, or from the man, it does not matter.

Explaining the words of the verse الَّذِى بِيَدِهِۦ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ (in whose hands lies the marriage tie), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself said: ولی عقدة النکاح الزوج , that is, 'the husband is the guardian (*walī*) of the bond of mar-

riage.' This *hadith* appears in Darqutni as narrated by 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb from his father on the authority of his grandfather, and also from Sayyidna 'Ali رضى الله عنه and Sayyidna ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه (Qurtubi).

This also proves that the authority to continue or terminate the bond of marriage rests with the husband. It is he who can pronounce *talaq* (divorce). The woman cannot divorce her husband.

Verses 238 - 239

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوٰتِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ الْوُسْطٰى وَقُومُوا لِلّٰهِ قٰنِتِيْنَ ○ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا اَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَاِذَآ اَمِنْتُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ مَّالَمْ تَكُوْنُوا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ○

Take due care of all the prayers, and the middle prayer, and stand before Allah in total devotion. But if you are in fear, then (pray) on foot or riding. And when you are in peace, recite the name of Allah as He has taught you what you did not know. (Verses 238 - 239)

Commentary

Based on the authority of some *ahadith*, a very large number of '*ulama*', have said that *al-salat al-wusta* or the middle *salah* is the *salah* of '*Asr* because there are before it, two Salahs during the day, that of *Fajr* and *Zuhr*; and after these come two evening Salahs, that of *Maghrib* and '*Isha*'. Special emphasis has been placed on it because this is a time in which most of the people are busy in their professional work.

Incidentally, the Qur'anic word, *Qanitin* meaning obedient or submitting, rendered here as 'stand before Allah in total devotion', has been explained in *Hadith* as denoting *sukut* or motion-less silence.

It was through this very verse that talking in *salah* was forbidden. Earlier, talking was permissible. The verse 239 has allowed a special way of offering prayers in the state of 'fear' i.e. the state of war. In such a state, one can offer *salah* (prayer) while standing, with a condition that he can stand in one place without moving, and can make the gesture of *sajdah* in a lower position than he makes in *ruku*'. However, *salah* cannot be performed while walking. If it is not possible to perform the prayer in the said manner, such as at the time of actual

fighting, then, it is permissible to delay the prayer and to offer it later as *qaḍā'*.

Verses 240 - 242

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُوْنَ اَزْوَاجًا ۖ وَّصِيَّةً لِّاَزْوَاجِهِمْ
مَّتَاعًا اِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ اِخْرَاجٍ ۚ فَاِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ
فِيْ مَا فَعَلْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَّعْرُوْفٍ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ 0
وَلِلْمُطَلَّقٰتِ مَتَاعٌ ۢ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۗ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِيْنَ 0 كَذٰلِكَ
يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ 0

And those among you who pass away and leave wives behind are to make a will in favour of their wives to benefit them for one year without being expelled. Then, if they move out, there is no sin on you in what they have done for themselves of the recognized practice. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. And the divorced women deserve a benefit as recognized, being an obligation on the God-fearing. This is how Allah makes His verses clear to you, that you may understand. (Verses 2:240 - 242)

The text now returns to the subject of divorce mentioned in verses 234-237. The command to take due care of all prayers (verses 238-239) put in between was to remind that the real thing in life is a constant orientation towards Allah, not only in prayers where it is more pronounced, but also in social relationships such as marriage and divorce, rather, in all areas of one's life. The message is: Follow rules set by Allah in your ultimate interest.

Verses 240-242 cited above give guidance on the provision of residence and maintenance for widows which has been explained in the commentary which follows.

1. In the Age of Ignorance, the period of waiting for a widow was one year, and in Islam, it came to be four months and ten days rather than one full year as we already know from يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّعَشْرًا :'They keep themselves waiting for four months and ten days,' in Verse 234, explained earlier. However, women were given a certain advantage in this respect. Those were the days when the injunction of

inheritance was not revealed and a wife's share in the inheritance was yet to be determined; in fact, the rights of all others simply revolved around the will of the deceased, as we have already learnt from the explanation of the verse 2:180. Therefore, it was made obligatory that a woman should be allowed to live in the premises of her late husband's house for one full year if she so desires. It was also mandatory under this arrangement that she be given her maintenance during this period out of what has been left behind by her husband. This rule is mentioned in this verse. Husbands have been instructed to make wills to this effect. Since this was the right of the woman and she had the choice to receive or leave it, therefore, it was not permissible for the inheritors to evict her out of the house, but it was permissible for her not to live in that house at her discretion, and leave her due for the inheritors. The condition, however, was that *'iddah* or the waiting period of four months and ten days be completed. After the completion of this period she could leave the house of her husband and could enter into a new marriage with another person. This is what is meant by the Qur'ānic expression: "Then, if they move out, there is no sin on you in what they have done for themselves of the recognized practice." However, going out during the period of *'iddah* and getting married was all counted as sin -- not only for the woman concerned but also for those who could stop her yet did not do so. When 'the verse of inheritance' was revealed, the woman received her ordained share in the house and in all other items of inheritance on the strength of which she had the choice to live in her section of the house and spend out of her share in the inheritance after the completion of four months and ten days, and this verse was abrogated.

Verse 241: The divorced women deserve a benefit

Providing compensatory benefits ('مَتَاعٌ : *matā*') for divorced women has also been dealt with in verses earlier than this, but that was restricted to two types of divorced women who were divorced before privacy and consummation. The first case of providing compensatory benefits was the giving of a set of clothes. The second case was of providing compensatory benefit in the form of half of the dower. Now remains the case of divorcees who were divorced after privacy and consummation. Here, providing compensatory benefits to one whose dower has already been fixed lies in giving her the full amount of dower or

mahr. For one whose dower has not already been fixed, a post-consummation divorce will make it obligatory to give her *mahr al-mithl* or 'equivalent dower' (as customarily given in the immediate family circle of the woman). If the word 'benefit' used in this verse is taken to mean 'dower', its payment is obligatory according to these details. However, if we take *matā'* to mean a particular benefit, that is, the giving of a gift or set of clothes, then giving this to a particular type of divorced woman is obligatory which has been pointed out earlier. In the rest of the cases, this is *mustahabb* or desirable. And should *matā'* be taken to mean maintenance or *nafaqah*, then it is obligatory until the expiry of *'iddah* in the case of a divorce after which *'iddah* has to be observed. The divorce may be revocable (رجعی) or irrevocable (بائن) -- it does not matter. To sum up, the verse, by using universally applicable words, covers all situations.

Verses 243 - 244

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ خَرَجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ اُلُوْفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مُوْتُوْا ثُمَّ اَحْيَاهُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ٥ وَقَاتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ٥

Have you not seen those who being in thousands, left their homes to escape death? So, to them Allah said, "Be dead." Then He raised them alive. Surely, Allah is all-gracious to people, but most of the people are not grateful. And fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verses 243 - 244)

Commentary

In a uniquely eloquent manner, the two verses (243, 244) appearing above and verse 245 which follows, present guidance that prompts the sacrifice of one's life and possessions in the way of Allah Almighty. Consequently, before stating related injunctions, an important event of history has been taken up which makes it clear that death and life are subservient to the destiny determined by Allah. Going into a battle in *jihād* is not the cause of death, and running away from it, out of cowardice, is not the means to avoid death.

On the authority of revered Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) and their successors (*Tābi'in*), Tafsir ibn Kathir explains this event as follows:

There was a group of Israelites in a city which was struck by plague or some other epidemic. The whole group, some ten thousand in number, panicked. Leaving the city out of fear of death, all of them went out to camp in an open plain located between two mountains. Allah Almighty, in order to impress upon other peoples of the world that no living being can escape death by running away from it, sent two angels who stood on the two ends of the plain and sent forth some sort of shrill cry which caused all of them to drop dead instantly. Not one of them was left alive. When the people living in the adjoining area heard about this event, they hurried to the site. Making arrangements to shroud and bury ten thousand human beings was no easy task. They, therefore, enclosed the whole area with a fence of boughs making a hovel-like shed for the corpses which, in due course, were decomposed leaving bare bones lying around. After a long time, one of the prophets of Bani Israel, whose name has been identified as *Ḥizqil* or Ezekiel, passed through this location. He was amazed to see human bone structures strewn all over inside an enclosed shed. The whole story of these people was related to him through revelation. Prophet Ezekiel, عليه السلام prayed Allah to bring these people back to life. Allah Almighty answered his prayer and he was asked to address those crumbled bones in the following manner: ايتها العظام البالية أن الله يامرك أن تجتمعى 'O bones, old and worn, Allah commands you to gather together (joint by joint, as you were).'

These bones received the command of Allah Almighty through the words of the Prophet and obeyed it. Isn't it that these very bones are considered by the whole world, devoid of reason and consciousness but they too, like every single particle of the world, are oriented to Divine commands and, possess senses and perceptive ability in proportion to their state of being, and are obedient to Allah Almighty. This is what the Holy Qur'ān points to in the verse: أَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى (20:50). It means that Allah Almighty created everything and then gave it (built-in) guidance in proportion to its state of being. The great poet, Maulanā Rūmi has said about such phenomena:

خــــــاك و بـاد و آب و آتـش بـنـده انـد

بـامـن و تـو مـــــــرده بـاحـق زنـده انـد

Dust, air, water and fire have been bonded together;
To me and you they are dead; to God they are alive.

So, when every human bone found its proper place at the behest of a single call, the Prophet was commanded to give yet another call to them as follows:

أيتها العظام إن اللهَ يأمرك أن تكتسى لحما و عصبا وجلدا

O bones, Allah Almighty commands you to wear your muscles, flesh, nerves and skin.

Immediately following the call, every skeleton of bones turned into a complete corpse under their very eyes. Then came the command that their souls be addressed as follows:

أيتها الأرواح إن الله يامرك أن ترجع كل روح إلى الجسد الذى كانت تعمره

O souls, Allah Almighty commands you to return to your respective bodies you once inhabited.

As the call was given, all corpses stood up alive before their very eyes and started looking around in wonder. They were saying: سبحانك لا إله إلا انت : 'Sacred are You (O Lord); there is no god but You.'

This formidable event was not only a thought-provoker for the wise of the world, its philosophers and thinkers, and certainly, a decisive argument against the deniers of the Last Day, but was also a guidance for mankind pointing out that running because of the fear of death, be it from *jihād* or from plague or some other epidemic, is just not possible for one who believes in Allah Almighty and in the fate He has determined -- the one who is certain in his belief (*'īmān*) that there is a time for death; it cannot come a second earlier, and it cannot be postponed to a second later. Therefore, this effort to run from death is not only redundant and wasteful, but also goes on to become the cause of Allah Almighty's displeasure.

Now let us look at this incident through the words of the Holy Qur'ān. To relate the event, it says: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ that is, 'Have you not seen those who left their homes to escape death?'

It must be noted here that this incident belongs to a time thousands of years before the Holy Prophet ﷺ . He just cannot be asked to see it. What then, is the purpose of saying أَلَمْ تَرَ : 'Have you not seen?' Commentators have said that, in all situations where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been addressed with the words: أَلَمْ تَرَ (Have you not seen?) -- although the incident belongs to a time earlier than him, and it cannot be 'seen' by any stretch of imagination -- the act of seeing (*rū'yah*) stands for seeing through the heart (*rū'yah al-qalb*), which means seeing through knowledge and insight. In still other words, 'Have you not seen?' appears on such occasions in the sense of أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ :'Did you not know?' But there is wisdom in allowing this situation to be expressed through the Qur'ānic form : أَلَمْ تَرَ . It points out that this incident is patently known and seen and that this incident is as certain as if it is being seen today, and is worth seeing too. The addition of the word إِلَى (*ilā*: toward) after أَلَمْ تَرَ : 'Have you not seen?' helps pointing out in this direction as based on the nuances of the language.

Immediately following this, they have been identified as being fairly large in numbers --وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ (being in thousands). As to what the exact number was, there are various reports, but in accordance with the rules of Arabic language, this word *ulūfun* is *jam' al-kathrah* (plural of multitude), which is not used for something less than ten. This tells us that their number was not less than ten thousand.

After that, it is said: فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مُوْتُوا that is, Allah Almighty said to them: 'Be dead'. This command of Allah Almighty could both be direct, or indirect -- through an angel, as it is in another verse (36:82): إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُوْلَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ which means : When He wishes to do something, He bids it to be, so it comes to be.

After that, it is said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ that is, surely Allah Almighty is immensely graceful to human beings. This includes the grace He showed to that particular group of people from the Bani Israel by bringing them back to life, as well as the grace He has shown to the community of Muḥammad ﷺ by telling them about this incident and by making it a model lesson for them.

In the end, to awaken the negligence-prone man, it was said: وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ : 'But most of the people are ungrateful.' It means

that human beings do behold thousands of demonstrations of Divine grace and mercy, yet most of them show no gratitude.

Related Injunctions and Rulings

This verse helps us identify some facts and injunctions. These are as follows:

Divine decree overcomes human planning: No effort can be effective against that which has been determined by Allah (*Taqdīr*) and running away from *jihād* or plague or its likes cannot help one save his life (*Tadbīr*), nor being in it can become a cause of death. The fact is that death comes at an appointed time; it can neither be earlier nor later.

Rules pertaining to the place of epidemic: It is not permissible to escape out from an area affected by plague and its likes for safety elsewhere. In addition to this, as said by the noble Prophet ﷺ, it is not correct for other people to go there. It appears in *Ḥadīth*:

إن هذا السقم عذب به الأمم قبلكم فإذا سمعتم به فى الأرض فلا تدخلوها ، وإذا وقع بأرضٍ وأنتم بها فلا تخرجوا فرارا

> Allah Almighty has, through this disease (plague), punished peoples who were before you. So, when you hear about its spreading in a certain area, do not go there; and if it spreads in an area where you already are, do not go out escaping from it. (Bukhārī and Muslim and Ibn Kathīr)

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once embarked on a journey heading for Syria. When he reached *Sarāgh*, a place near *Tabūk* bordering Syria, he came to know that the whole of Syria was affected by a severe plague. This was regarded as a great calamity in the history of Syria. This plague is known as '*Amawās*', because it started from a town called '*Amawas*' (located near *Baytul-Maqdis*) and spread throughout the country. Thousands died and became *shahid* in this plague including many *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'in* (Companions and their Successors).

When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ heard about the severity of the plague, he decided to stay where he was and sought the advice of the noble Companions, رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین whether they should go into Syria at

such a time, or they should return back. There was not one blessed person present during the consultations who was aware of any guidance from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about this matter. Later, Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf رضی اللہ عنہ narrated the following *hadith* :

> إن رسولَ الله صلَّى الله عليه وسلَّم ذكر الوجع فقال: رجز وعذاب عذب به الأمم ثم بقي منه بقية فيذهب المرّة ويأتي الأخرى فمن سمع به بأرضٍ فلا يقدمنَّ عليه ومن كان بأرض وقع بها فلا يخرج فراراً منها
>
> The Holy Prophet ﷺ referring to the disease (plague) said: This is a punishment that was inflicted on some peoples; later on some of it remained. This remainder goes away for sometime, then returns. So, one who hears that a certain area is affected by it, he should not go there; and one who is already there, he should not go out running from it (the plague). (al-Bukhari and others)

When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ heard this *hadith*, he ordered his men to return. Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaydah رضی اللہ عنہ , the governor of Syria was present on the occasion. Taking notice of the orders given by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ , he commented: أفرارا من قدر الله (Do you want to run from Divine destiny?) In reply, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'O Abū 'Ubaydah, I wish this was said by someone else' meaning thereby 'a comment like this, and that too from you, is certainly surprising.' Then he said: نعم نفر من قدر الله إلى قدر الله : 'Yes, we do run from Divine decree to (nothing but) Divine decree' meaning thereby -- 'whatever we are doing we are doing in obedience to none else but Allah and His command which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has explained to us.'

3. There is great wisdom in the prophetic sayings about plague: In accordance with the *hadith* stated above, we have been told that it is prohibited for outsiders to enter an area affected by plague or its likes; while it is equally prohibited for those who live there to run for their lives from that area.

In addition to this, the basic Islamic belief is that neither going anywhere is the cause of death, nor running from anywhere is the source of deliverance from it. Keeping this cardinal belief of Islam in view, the given instruction is based on very far-sighted stances of wisdom.

(1) Let's look at the first element of wisdom in stopping outsiders

from going into a plague-affected area. Isn't it quite possible that someone may be at the fag end of his years and should he die because of this disease, it might have occurred to the deceased at some stage before his death that he might have lived had he not come into that area. Not only him, others might also think that his death occurred because he came there; although, whatever happened was pre-ordained. His age was no more than that. No matter where he lived, his death had to come at that particular time. It may be noted that the belief of Muslims has been saved from indecision through this instruction lest they should fall a victim to misunderstanding.

(2). The second aspect of wisdom here relates to the guidance Allah Almighty has given to man that he should not go where there is a danger of being harmed, or an apprehension of being killed; in fact, he should do his best to keep away from everything that could cause harm or death. Not only that, it has been made binding on every man to save his life. This rule demands that one should, keeping his total trust and belief in Divine decree, take all necessary precautionary measures without any negligence. One of these measures is that he should not go to a place where his life may be in danger.

Similarly, the instruction, that residents of an area infected with plague should not escape out of their fearing death, has its own merits:

a) The first wise counsel has a social and collective nature. For instance, should this escaping in panic become contagious, the rich and the powerful in the area would certainly run away. But, what would happen to those who are incapable of going anywhere. To begin with, left all alone, they will be terrified to their death. Then there will be sick among them -- who will take care of them? Should they die, who will manage their burial?

b) The second point of wisdom here tells that there will be some among the people present in that area who would be carrying germs of this disease. If they travel in that condition, they are likely to suffer more from all sorts of hardships. If they get sick while travelling, who knows what would come upon them. Ibn al-Madini has quoted the saying of scholars: مافر أحد من الوباء فسلم : 'One who runs from an epidemic never stays safe.' (Qurṭubī)

c) There is still a third element of wisdom here. Isn't it that people infected by germs of the disease would be potential carriers of the epidemic wherever they go? If they elected to stay where they are, with patience and in trust, they might possibly get rid of the disease. And if, death was pre-ordained in this very disease, they will have the proud rank of *shahādah* (martyrdom) because of their patience and perseverance, as has been pointed out in *Ḥadith*.

Imām al-Bukhāri has reported from Yaḥyā ibn Ya'mur that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah al-Ṣiddiqah رضی الله تعالی عنها told him that she had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about plague when he informed her that this disease was a punishment sent to a people who were to be punished by Allah's will. Then, Allah made it mercy for true believers. So, a slave of Allah who stays on with patience and peace in his locality believing that no harm can touch him except that which Allah has decreed for him -- for such a person the merit in return shall be equal to that of a *shahid*.

And this also explains the *ḥadith* in which it is said: 'The plague is *shahādah* (martyrdom) and one who dies in the plague is a *shahīd* (martyr).' (Qurṭubi, vol.3, p. 235).

Some Exceptions

The words used in the *ḥadith* are: فلا تخرجوا فرارا منه (You should not go out running from it) which tell us that a person who goes somewhere else, not because of the fear of death, but because of some other pressing need, will not be affected by this prohibition. Similarly, if someone has a firm belief that he cannot escape his destiny wherever he goes, but he wants to go simply for change of climate, he is also exempted from this prohibition.

Similarly, if a person enters an area affected by plague because of some pressing need while he firmly believes that death will not come to him just because he is coming here -- since death is subservient to the will of Allah, it will be permissible for him to go there.

(3) The third principle inferred from this verse is: that it is also not permissible to desert *Jihād* from fear of death. This question has been taken up elsewhere in the noble Qur'ān in greater details, where some special situations have been exempted.

The subject dealt with in this verse reappears in yet another verse which deals with those who run away from *Jihād* or do not take part in it. It is said:

أَلَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا قُلْ فَادْرَأُوا عَنْ أَنفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ

> Some people (who did not themselves take part in *jihād*) say (about those who do take part in *jihād*, and die as *shahīds*) 'These people did not listen to us, therefore, they were killed. If they had listened to us, they would have not been killed.' (The blessed Prophet ﷺ was commanded to) tell them: 'If you have the power to escape death, why worry about others, worry about your own selves and rescue yourselves from death', (that is, whether or not you go in *jihād* does not matter; death will come to you even when sitting home).

It is a marvel of nature that the greatest commander of the Muslim army in the early days of Islam, Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd رضى الله عنه, who was known as the 'sword of Allah' and who spent his entire Islamic life in *jihād*, did not meet his death as a *shahīd* on the battlefield! He died on his sick-bed, at his home. Close to his hour of death, lamenting over his dying on bed, he said to his family: 'I participated in so many great battles in *jihād*. I do not have a single part on my body, which has no wound-mark inflicted by swords and spears; but here I am, dying like a donkey on my bed. May Allah Almighty give no rest to cowards. Let them hear my advice.'

The incident relating to the Bani Israel was brought in this verse as an introduction. In the next verse appears the injunction relating to *jihād* and *qitāl* (fighting in the way of Allah) which was the real purpose in introducing this story, that is: Do not take going on *jihād* as going into the jaws of death and do not assume that running away from *jihād* will deliver you from your appointed time of death. Better still, obey the injunctions of Allah Almighty and achieve the best of both the worlds. Allah Almighty is the Hearer and Knower of all you say and do.

The third verse (245), which follows, deals with the merits of spending in the way of Allah.

Verses 245

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِیْ یُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَیُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗۤ اَضْعَافًا كَثِیْرَةًؕ وَاللّٰهُ یَقْبِضُ وَیَبْصُۜطُ وَاِلَیْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 0

Who is the one who would give Allah a good loan so that Allah multiplies it for him many times? And Allah withholds and extends, and to Him you are to be returned.

Commentary

1. In یُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (who would give Allah a good loan?) the word 'loan' refers to good deeds and to the act of spending in the way of Allah. This was expressed figuratively as *qarḍ* (literally, 'loan'), otherwise everything belongs to Allah. It simply means that whatever you spend will surely be returned to you (in the form of a reward in the Hereafter) just as a loan is surely returned. The promise of increased or multiplied return appears in a *ḥadīth* which declares that a date spent in the way of Allah is so increased by Allah Almighty that it outgrows the mountain of *Uḥud*.

Giving 'loan' to Allah Almighty has also been explained as the giving of actual loan to His slaves i.e. the human beings and thereby helping them in their hour of need. So, the act of giving loan has been credited with great merit in *Ḥadīth*. The noble Prophet ﷺ said:

ما من مسلم يقرض مسلما قرضا مرّة إلا كان كصدقته مرتين

For every Muslim, who gives loan to another Muslim, it will be equal to having given *ṣadaqah* (charity) twice. (Mazhari with reference to Ibn Majah)

2. Hearing this verse, says Ibn al-'Arabī, people split in three groups. The first group is that of those unfortunate people who, after hearing this verse, said: 'Muḥammad's Lord is poor, and we are rich.' The reply to this comment was given by another verse:

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِیْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِیْرٌ وَّنَحْنُ اَغْنِیَآءُ

Allah has surely heard the saying of those who said, "Allah is poor and we are rich". (3:181)

The second group is that of those who, hearing this verse, elected to act against it and adopted miserliness as their way of life. The love

and greed of material possessions so tied them down that they remained deprived of the very ability to spend in the way of Allah.

The third group is that of sincere Muslims who lost no time and acted as directed by the verse giving the best of their possessions in the way of Allah, such as is the case of Companion Abū al-Daḥdāḥ and others. When this verse was revealed, Sayyidna Abu al-Daḥdāḥ رضی اللہ عنہ presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him: 'O Messenger of Allah, may my father and mother be sacrificed to you, does Allah Almighty need loan from us, although He is *Ghanī*, the one who needs no loan?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Yes, Allah Almighty does wish to grant you entry in Paradise through it.' Hearing this, Sayyidnā Abū al-Daḥdāḥ رضی اللہ عنہ said. 'Let the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stretch his hand forward.' He stretched his hand forward. Now Abū al-Daḥdāḥ started saying:

> 'I own two date farms. I own nothing except these. I give the loan of these two farms of mine to Allah Almighty.'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him: 'Dedicate one of these as *waqf* (endowment) in the way of Allah and keep the other to take care of your family needs.' Abū al-Daḥdāḥ said: "You be my witness that I 'spend' the better of the two farms which has six hundred date trees in the way of Allah." He said: 'Allah will bless you with Paradise in return.'

Abū al-Daḥdāḥ رضی اللہ عنہ came to his house and told his wife about it. She too was very pleased with this wonderful deal. The noble Prophet ﷺ said:

كم من عذق رداح و دار فياح لأبى الدحداح

> Countless trees laden with dates and spacious palaces are eagerly waiting for Abū al-Daḥdāḥ (in Paradise). (Qurṭubī)

3. While returning *qarḍ* (loan), paying a little more than taken is a favourable practice only if any increase on the amount of loan has not been made a pre-condition. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

ان خياركم أحسنكم قضاءً

> The best person among you is the one who fulfils his obligation (loan) in a good manner.

If increase or premium has been made a condition, then, that is *ḥaram* (unlawful), and it is *ribā* (interest) as well.

Verses 246 - 251

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ إِذْ قَالُوا
لِنَبِيٍّ لَهُمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ قَالَ هَلْ
عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا ۖ قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا
نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَائِنَا ۖ فَلَمَّا
كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ
بِالظَّالِمِينَ ○ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ
مَلِكًا ۚ قَالُوا أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ
مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ ۚ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ
وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ○ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ
التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ
وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ ○ فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ
بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي
إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ ۚ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا
جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ
بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُو اللَّهِ كَمْ مِنْ
فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ○
وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا
وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ○ فَهَزَمُوهُمْ
بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَ
عَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ

لَّفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُوفَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝

Did you not see a group from the children of Isrā'il, after (the time of) Mūsā when they said to a prophet of theirs: "Send us a king so that we may fight in the way of Allah." He said: "Is it (not) likely, if fighting is enjoined upon you, that you would not fight." They said: "What is wrong with us that we would not fight while we have been driven away from our homes and our sons?" But, when fighting was enjoined upon them, they turned away, except a few of them. And Allah is All-Aware of the unjust. And their prophet said to them: "Allah has sent you 'Ṭālūt' [54] as king. They said: "How could he have kingship over us when we are more entitled to the kingship than he? And he has not been given a wide measure of wealth." He said: "Allah has chosen him over you and has increased his size in knowledge and physique. And Allah gives His kingship to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing." And their prophet said to them: "The sign of his kingship is that the Ark shall come to you having therein tranquility from your Lord, and the remains of what the House of Mūsā and the House of Hārūn had left, carried by the angels. Surely, in it there is a sign for you, if you are believers." So, when 'Ṭālūt' set out along with the troops, he said: "Allah is going to test you by a river, so, whoever drinks from it is not my man, and whoever does not taste it is surely a man of mine, except the one who scoops a little with his hand." Then, they drank from it, except a few of them. So, when he crossed it and (crossed) those who believed with him, they said: "There is no strength with us today against 'Jālūt'[55] and his troops." Said those who believed that they were to meet Allah: "How many small groups have overcome the large groups by the will of Allah. And Allah is with the patient." And when they faced 'Jālūt' and his troops they said: "Our Lord, pour out patience on us, make firm our feet and help us against the disbelieving people." So, they defeated them

54. Known in the Bible as Saul.
55. Known in the Bible as Goliath.

by the will of Allah, and Dāwūd killed 'Jālūt', and Allah gave him the kingdom and the wisdom and taught him what He willed. Had Allah not been pushing back some people by means of some others, the earth would have been spoiled. But Allah is all-gracious to all the worlds. (Verses 246 - 251)

Commentary

1. Verse 246: إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيٍّ لَّهُمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُّقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ (When they said to a prophet of theirs: "Send us a king so that we may fight in the way of Allah)."

These people from the Banī Isrā'il had abandoned the injunctions given by Allah Almighty. When the infidel Amalekites were made to rule over them, they began thinking about correcting the situation. The name of the prophet mentioned here is Samuel (Arabic: شموئيل , Hebrew: *Shemuel*).

Verse 248: The story of Tālūt and Jālūt

The Banī Isrā'il used to have the legacy of a wooden chest (also identified as the Ark of the Covenant). Moses and other prophets of Bani Isra'il would keep this chest in the frontline of the battlefield. Its *barakah* (blessing, benediction) used to give them victory. When *Jālūt* (جالوت : Goliath) overcame Banī Isrā'il, he took this chest away with him. When Allah Almighty willed the return of the chest, it so happened that the infidels were struck by some epidemic or calamity at places where they carried this chest. Five cities were turned desolate. Nonplussed, they loaded it on two bullocks and drove them off. Then, the angels took control of the bullocks and made it reach Talut's doorsteps. (*Tālūt* is the Qur'ānic name of the king known in the Bible as Saul) When the Bani Isra'il saw this sign, they believed in the kingdom of *Tālūt*, who then mounted an attack on *Jālūt* while the weather was very hot.

Verse 249: قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُم بِنَهَرٍ (He said: Allah is going to test you by a river).

The wisdom behind this test, as perceived by this humble commentator, appears to be as follows. Not difficult to imagine is the excitement created on such occasions but there are not many who would stay firm in their hour of trial. And should such a time come,

the weakness shown by such people becomes contagious making others panic as well. Allah Almighty willed that such people be pruned out. This purpose was accomplished by this test, which is very appropriate, because steadfastness is necessary in fighting. So, being patient, when water is made available without asking in a state of intense thirst, is a proof of steadfastness, and dashing for water is a proof of its absence. Later on comes the unusual: Those who drank too much water became mysteriously more incapacitated. This has appeared in Rūh al-Ma'ānī on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ . Now the events and sayings mentioned in this story tell us that there were three kinds of people among them:

(1) The weak in faith who failed to make the grade in their hour of trial.

(2) The perfect who fully succeeded in their trial but did feel concerned about how low they were in numbers.

(3) The most perfect who did not bother even about that.

Verse 252

تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ وَاِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ○

These are the verses of Allah that We recite to you with all veracity, and certainly you are among the Messengers. (Verse 252)

Since the affirmation of the prophethood of the noble Messenger of Allah ﷺ is also a major objective of the Holy Qur'ān, it has been so asserted as and when the occasion warrants. That he is correctly reporting the event (in verses 246-251), while he neither learnt it from someone nor heard it anywhere nor saw it, is a miracle which is a sound proof of his prophethood. Verse 252 here (and verse 253 which follows) demonstrate this proof.

It is being said here that these verses in which this event has been mentioned 'are the verses of Allah that We recite to you with all veracity' and this proves that 'you are certainly among the Messengers.'

Verse 253

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ۘ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ

وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٍ ۚ وَاٰتَيْنَا عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَيَّدْنٰهُ
بِرُوْحِ الْقُدُسِ ۗ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ مِّنْۢ
بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ وَلٰكِنِ اخْتَلَفُوْا فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اٰمَنَ
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَفَرَ ۗ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوْا ۗ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ
مَا يُرِيْدُ ۝

Those are the messengers some of whom We have given excellence over some others. Among them there is he whom Allah spoke to, and some of them He raised steps higher. And We gave clear signs to 'Isa, the son of Maryam (Jesus, the son of Mary) and supported him with the Holy Spirit. And if Allah so willed, those succeeding him would have not fought against each other after clear signs had come to them. But they disagreed among themselves. So, there were some who believed and there were some who disbelieved and if Allah so willed, they would have not fought against each other. But Allah does what He intends. (Verse 253)

Commentary

1. In Verse 253, beginning with تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ ('those are the Messengers'), the purpose is to give solace and comfort to the noble Prophet ﷺ since the deniers refused to recognize his prophethood, inspite of the fact that it was conclusively proved, as has been stated in the verse 252: وَاِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ (And certainly you are among the Messengers.) as well. This situation caused him pain. Therefore, Allah Almighty made him aware of the coming of other prophets too, in varying degrees of station, but universal belief was not witnessed in any of their communities -- some supported while some others opposed. However, this too has its wise considerations which may not necessarily be visible to everyone, but this much is important that one should generally believe that there is definitely a certain wisdom behind this.

2. Since the words تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ (Those are the Messengers some of whom We have given excellence over others) in this verse clearly indicate that some prophets are given higher status than others, we have a difficulty on our hands when we compare this with a *hadith*, where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

لاتفضلوا بين أنبياء الله

Do not seek preference among prophets.

لا تخيروني على موسى

Do not give me precedence over Mūsā.

لا أقول إن أحدا أفضل من يونس بن متى

I cannot say if anyone is better than Yūnus ibn Mātta.

These *aḥādith* so obviously forbid the giving of preference to some prophets over some other prophets.

The reply is: These *aḥādith* mean to tell us not to give preference to some prophets over some others, without any proof, out of our own opinion. This is because a prophet's having higher status means that he has a high station in the sight of Allah. Obviously, this knowledge cannot be acquired through conjectures and surmises but should such a proof come from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, establishing the precedence of some prophets over some others, then it will be necessary to believe in it.

Now, as to his saying: لا أقول إن أحدا أفضل من يونس بن متى (I cannot say if anyone is better than Yūnus ibn Mātta) and لا تخيروني على موسى (Do not give me precedence over Mūsā), this is related to the time when he was not given the knowledge that he has precedence over all other prophets. This was disclosed to him later on through revelation and he did tell the noble Companions about it. (Mazhari)

3. As regards the statement مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ (Among them there is he whom Allah spoke to), it may be noted that the conversation with Mūsā عليه السلام may be without an angel as intermediary, but it certainly was not without *ḥijāb* (obstruction of view). So, there remains no conflict of meaning with what has been stated in the verse: مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّكَلِّمَهُ اللّٰهُ (It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him) (42:51), in which conversation without *ḥijāb* has been negated. However, post-death conversation without *ḥijāb* is possible, so this verse from Sūrah al-Shūra relates to the life in this world.

Verse 254

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ

لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَّلَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَالْكٰفِرُونَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُونَ ○

O those who believe spend from what We have given to you before comes a day when there is no trading, no friendship, no intercession. And the disbelievers are the unjust. (Verse 254)

Commentary

Many injunctions relating to acts of worship and dealings with human beings have been taken up in this Sūrah, specially all those a person dislikes to obey finding them burdensome. Then, the most difficult act is to 'spend' one's life and possessions; and when you look at Divine injunctions relating to most situations they either relate to a man's life or his possessions. And when a man falls into the trap of sin, it is either caused by his love of life or expediency of possessions in most cases. As such, the love for these two is the root of sins, and the defence against and the deliverance from it is the object of all acts of obedience. It is for this reason that, following the injunctions relating to worship and social transactions, the subject of 'fighting' and 'spending' in the way of Allah were taken up. The first appeared in وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ (And fight in the way of Allah) (244) and the second in مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ (Who is the one who would give Allah a good loan?) (245) After that, the former was emphasized by the story of *Tālūt*, and now, emphasis is being laid on the later by أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ (Spend from what We have given to you) (254). Since a large number of affairs relating to the worship of Allah and dealings with human beings depend on spending out of what Allah has given, this subject has been dealt with in a greater detail. Therefore, the sections that follow have, in most of them, a discussion of the second aspect, which is, the 'spending' out of one's possessions. To sum up, it means: The time to act is still there. In the Hereafter, deeds are not on sale. They cannot be borrowed from a friend either. Once caught by the punishment, one cannot be released on someone's intercession, unless Allah Himself forgives.

Verse 255

اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَۚ اَلْحَيُّ الْقَيُّوْمُۚ لَا تَاْخُذُهٗ سِنَةٌ وَّلَا نَوْمٌؕ لَهٗ مَا
فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِؕ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهٗٓ اِلَّا

بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ
عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ
حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ O

Allah: There is no god but He, the Alive, the All-Sustaining. Neither doze overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. Who can intercede with Him without His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills. His *Kursī* (chair) extends to the Heavens and to the Earth, and it does not weary Him to look after them. And he is the High, the Supreme. (Verse 255)

The merits of Ayāt-al Kursī

This is the greatest verse of the noble Qur'ān. *Aḥādīth* carry statements featuring its wonderful merits and blessings. It appears in the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that this verse is the most meritorious of all. According to another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ : 'Which is the greatest *āyah* (verse) of the Qur'ān?' Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ said: '*Āyah al-Kursī*'. Approvingly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'O Abū al-Mundhir, may Allah bless you in your knowledge.'

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضی اللہ عنہ asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ : 'O Messenger of Allah, which is the greatest *ayah* (verse) of the Qur'ān?' He said : '*Āyah al-Kursī*'. (Ibn Kathīr from Ahmad in Al-Musnad).

Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah رضی اللہ عنہ has reported the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying: 'There is a verse in Sūrah Al-Baqarah which is the *Sayyidah* (the Chief) of the verses of the Qur'an. The Satan leaves the house where it is recited.'

According to a *ḥadīth* in al-Nasā'ī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: If someone recites *Āyah al-Kursī* after every *farḍ ṣalāh*, nothing stops him from entering Paradise except death.' It means that, immediately after death, this person will start witnessing the traces of Paradise and its comfort and tranquillity.

This verse describes the Oneness of Allah's being and attributes in

a unique manner -- He is living, He hears and sees, He speaks, He is self-existent, He is eternal and everlasting, He is the innovator and creator of the entire universe, He is above changes and effects, He is the master of the whole universe, He is so exalted in His majesty that no one can speak before Him without His permission; He is the wielder of such absolute power that the tremendous function of creating the universe, sustaining it and making it work steadily, does not cause him to tire or relax. So all-encompassing is His knowledge that not the minutest possible atom or drop, open or hidden, could stay out of it. This is, in brief, the core sense of the verse. Now let us take up the meanings of its words in some details.

This verse has ten sentences. The first sentence is: اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ : 'Allah: There is no god but He.' The word, اَللّٰهُ (Allah) is like a proper noun for Allah's being. It means: 'the Being who combines all perfections and is free of all shortcomings.' 'There is no god but He' explains this Being. It says that there is absolutely nothing worth worshipping except this Being.

The second sentence is: اَلْحَيُّ الْقَيُّوْمُ : 'The Alive, the All-Sustaining.' The word 'حَيٌّ' means 'the living' in Arabic. Out of the Divine names, the introduction of this word is to emphasize that He is Ever-living and Ever-lasting. He is above and beyond death. The word قَيُّوْمٌ is derived from *Qiyām* which means 'to stand' and *qā'im* refers to 'one who stands.' The words, *Qayyūm* and *Qayyām* are forms of exaggeration. They mean: 'one who himself stands firmly and keeps others sustained and supported, all simultaneously.' *Qayyūm* is an attribute of Allah Almighty with which no created being can be associated, for what depends on others for its own existence and survival can hardly be expected to support something else. Therefore, a human being should not be called, '*Qayyūm*'. It is not permissible. People who corrupt the name, *'Abdūl-Qayyūm* (the slave of the *Qayyum*) by casually using just the second part -- *Qayyūm*, commit a grave error resulting in their sinfulness.

The combination of *Hayy* and *Qayyūm* from among the attributive names of Allah Almighty is الاسم الاعظم (*al-ism al-a'ẓam:* the Great Name) according to several revered elders. Sayyidnā 'Ali رضی اللہ عنہ says: 'There was a time during the Battle of *Badr* when I wished I could see what

the Holy Prophet ﷺ was doing. On arrival, I saw him in the state of *sajdah*, (the prescribed prostration) constantly saying, يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّومُ يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّومُ.

The third sentence is: لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَّلَا نَوْمٌ :'Neither doze overtakes Him nor sleep.' The word (سِنَةٌ : *sinatun*) denotes drowsiness which is the preliminary effect of coming sleep, while the word, نَوْمٌ : *nawm* refers to full sleep. The sense of the sentence; is that Allah Almighty is above and beyond states of drowsiness or sleep. When the word, *Qayyūm*, appearing in the previous sentence; told man that Allah is holding in perfect working unison the whole universe, which includes in itself, all skies and earths and all there is in them -- one could stray on to the idea, naturally so, in view of man's instinctive inquisitiveness, that the sacred 'Being' doing such a stupendous task must, at some time, feel tired, and need due moments of rest and sleep. In this second sentence of the text, man, who has limited knowledge and insight, and limited power, was warned that he should not measure Allah on his analogy or that of other created beings, never taking Him as similar to one's own self. He is above and beyond similarities and analogies. His power is absolutely perfect before which these doings are neither difficult nor tiresome and that His sacred being is above and beyond all sense-effects, weariness, exhaustion, drowsiness and sleep.

The fourth sentence is: لَهُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ : 'To Him belongs what is in the havens and what is in the earth.' The letter (*lām*) appearing in the very beginning, has been used to denote ownership. Thus it means that everything on the earth or in the heavens is all owned by Allah Almighty. He is the authority, and may do whatever He deems fit with them.

The fifth sentence is: مَنْ ذَا الَّذِىْ يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهٗٓ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهٖ :'Who can intercede with Him without His permission?' Here are some points implied in this sentence:

To begin with, when Allah Almighty is the master-owner of the entire universe and there is no one above Him, certainly then, no one is entitled to question Him about anything He does. In the wake of a command that flows from Him, the option of saying why and wherefore does not exist for anyone. However, someone interceding on someone's behalf was possible. This too has now been made clear that no mortal could even dare breath in the most exalted Presence of Allah

Almighty; but there are servants of Allah Almighty who have received the favour of His approval and acceptance and who would be specially allowed to speak and intercede. In short, recommendation or intercession, from anyone for anyone, will not be possible without Divine permission. It appears in *Ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of resurrection, I shall be the first to intercede on behalf of all human communities'. This is called *al-Maqām al-Maḥmūd*, the praised station, which is one of the distinctions of our noble Prophet ﷺ

The sixth sentence is: يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ : 'He knows what is before them and what is behind them.' It means that Allah Almighty is aware of all the states and events surrounding them. 'Before' and 'after' may also mean that Allah Almighty is aware of all states and events before their birth and after their birth. It is also possible that 'before' refers to states and events that are open to men, and 'after' denotes states and events that are hidden. If so, it would mean that the human knowledge covers certain things and does not cover certain others. Some things are open before a human being and some are hidden. But, before Allah Almighty all these are equal. His knowledge encompasses all these things equally. Incidentally, there is no contradiction in these two senses, which are both included in the scope of the verse.

The seventh sentence is: وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ :'And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills.' It means that man and the rest of the created beings cannot cover even a part of Allah's infinite knowledge except a certain part which Allah Almighty Himself allows to be given out of His knowledge. This is all one can know. Here it has been made clear that the all-encompassing knowledge of every particle in the universe is a particular attribute of none but Allah Almighty. No man, no created being can claim to have a share in it.

The eighth sentence is: وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ :'His *Kursī* extends to the Heavens and to the Earth.' It means that His *Kursī* (translated as chair or base of power) is so magnified that its spatial infinity houses, within itself, the seven heavens and the earth. Allah Almighty is above and beyond sitting and standing and all spatial location and

placement. Such verses should not be taken up on the analogy of our own states and affairs. The comprehension of the state of being, and the reality of His attributes, is above and beyond human reason. However, there are authentic narrations in *aḥādith* which simply tell us that *'Arsh* (translated as 'throne', being a seat of authority) and *Kursi* (chair) are heavenly bodies many times larger than the heavens and the earth.

Ibn Kathīr has reported from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضی الله عنه that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what the *Kursī* was and what did it look like. He said: 'By Allah, who is the master of my life, the seven heavens and the earth as compared with *Kursī* are like the small circle of a finger-ring lying on a huge plain.'

In some other narrations it has been stated that *Kursī* as compared to *'Arsh* (Throne) is also like the circle of a finger-ring on a huge plain.

The ninth sentence is: وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا :'And it does not weary Him to look after them.' It means that supporting the two magnificent creations of the heavens and the earth is not the least burdensome for Allah Almighty since doing so, with the perfect power of the Absolute Master, is easy.

The tenth and the last sentence is: وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ :'And He is the High, the Supreme.' It means that He is most exalted and great in majesty. In the previous nine sentences, the perfections of Allah's being and His attributes were stated. After having seen and understood these, every rational human being is bound to acknowledge that all honour, power and superiority belongs to none but the same Allah Almighty. To sum up, these ten sentences epitomize a description of Allah's Oneness and His perfections with clarity, and in detail.

Verse 256

لَآ إِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّينِ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَن يَكْفُرْ
بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا
انفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٥

There is no compulsion in Faith. The correct way has become distinct from the erroneous. Now, whoever rejects the Rebel and believes in Allah has grasped the

strongest ring that never breaks. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Verse 256)

Commentary

One who holds on to Islam firmly stays protected against destruction and deprivation. It was for this reason that such a person was likened to one who holds on firmly to the 'ring', the looped support of a strong rope, and thus manages to avoid falling down. As there is no danger of such a rope breaking apart and causing a fall, so there is no danger of destruction or loss in Islam -- should somebody just abandon the rope, that would be an entirely different matter. And should somebody abandon Islam itself, that would be an entirely different matter too. (Maulanā Thānavi: Bayān al-Qur'ān).

Keeping this verse in view, some people raise objections. They say this verse tells us that there is no compulsion in faith, although the teaching of *jihād* and *qitāl* (fighting) in Islam appears contrary to this principle.

Looking at this a little carefully, we can find out that the objection is not valid, since the teaching of *jihād* and *qitāl* in Islam is not to coerce people into accepting Faith. Had it been so, why would there be Islamic injunctions of *jizyah* to provide an umbrella of security for *kuffār* (disbelievers) which protects their life, property and honour? In fact, this is to remove disorder, strife or *fasād*, for Allah Almighty dislikes *fasād*, which is what the *kuffār* are after. Therefore, Allah Almighty says:

وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ۝

And they go about the earth spreading disorder and Allah does not like those who spread disorder. (5:64)

It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has ordained that the *fasād* created by these people should be removed by *jihād* and *qitāl*. So, killing such people is like the killing of serpents, scorpions and their harmful likes.

Islam has firmly banned the killing of women, children, the aged and the crippled etc., even in the heat of *jihād* on the battlefield, since they are incapable of creating disorder. Similarly, it has stopped the killing of those who become law-abiding citizens by promising to pay *jizyah* (compensatory dues paid by free non-Muslims under Muslim

rule against guarantee of the security of their life, property and honour).

This approach of Islam makes it clear that it does not force people to accept and enter Faith, rather far from it, by using it as a method of stopping oppression in the world, it hopes to establish justice and equity and peace and security. When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ invited an old Christian woman to accept Islam, she said in reply: أنا عجوز كبيرة والموت إلى قريب : 'I am an old woman nearing death.' Hearing this, Sayyidna 'Umar did not force her to come into the fold of Islam. In fact, he recited this very verse: لَآ اِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّيْنِ that is, 'there is no compulsion in Faith.'

Really and truly, coercion and compulsion to make one accept a faith are not possible at all because faith is not related to outward physical response; it relates to the heart. Coercion and compulsion affect nothing but the outsides of physique and this is all that is affected by *jihād* and *qitāl* (fighting in the way of Allah). Consequently, it is just not possible that people can be forced to accept faith through these measures. This proves that the verses of *jihād* and *qitāl* are not contradictory to the verse: لَآ اِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّيْنِ (There is no compulsion in Faith). (Mazharī, Qurṭubī)

Verse 257

اَللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَوْلِيٰٓـُٔهُمُ الطَّاغُوْتُ يُخْرِجُوْنَهُمْ مِّنَ النُّوْرِ اِلَى الظُّلُمٰتِ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝

Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light. As for those who disbelieve, their friends are the Rebels. They bring them out from the light into the depths of darkness. Those are people of Fire. There they remain for ever. (Verse 257)

Commentary

This verse also tells us that faith (*'Imān*) is the greatest blessing and disbelief (*kufr*) is the greatest misfortune, and that there is darkness in friendship with those who disbelieve (*kuffār*).

Verse 258

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِىْ حَآجَّ اِبْرٰهٖمَ فِىْ رَبِّهٖۤ اَنْ اٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ ۘ اِذْ
قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّىَ الَّذِىْ يُحْىٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۙ قَالَ اَنَا اُحْىٖ وَاُمِيْتُ ؕ قَالَ
اِبْرٰهٖمُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْتِىْ بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَاْتِ بِهَا مِنَ
الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِىْ كَفَرَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۚ O

Did you not see the one who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingship. When Ibrahim said: "My Lord is the One Who gives life and brings death," he said: "I give life and I bring death." Said Ibrāhīm: "Allah brings the sun out from the East, now, you bring it out from the West." Here, baffled was the one who disbelieved. And Allah does not put the unjust people on the right path. (Verse 258)

The verse refers to Namrūd, the emperor of Babylon, who denied the very existence of God and had a debate with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام on this issue. Allah has given him political power over a large territory. He should have been grateful to his Lord. But, on the contrary, his political power inflated him with pride and arrogance; he started denying the very existence of Him. It is in this context that the Holy Qur'ān says: 'the one who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingship."

In the course of argument, he asked Ibrāhīm عليه السلام about the basic attributes of God. He replied, "My Lord is the One who gives life and brings death." The foolish king did not understand the real nature of 'giving life' and 'bringing death.' Therefore, he argued that he, too, can kill anyone through his order and bring thereby death to him and can also let off a person sentenced to death and give thereby life to him. Obviously, his argument was totally absurd, because 'giving life' means to give life to something lifeless[56] .

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام felt that his addressee is unable to understand the real nature of 'giving life' and 'bringing death,' he

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56. And 'bringing death' means power which may remove the life from every living creature without a necessary intervention of an apparent cause.

switched over to another argument and said, "Allah brings the sun out from the East, now, you bring it out from the West." Here the king was baffled and could not answer the Abrahimic argument. But even after the truth became clear to him, he did not accept the guidance. Hence the Qur'ānic statement: "And Allah does not put the unjust people on the right path."

Injunctions and related considerations

1. It is evident from the words used in the verse that if an infidel is given political power or a high worldly status, there is no harm (for a Muslim) in referring to him as a holder of that position (Qurṭubī).

2. The verse also affirms the permissibility of having debate with such an infidel in order to manifest the difference between right and wrong.

3. Some people doubt the validity of the last argument of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, because Namrūd could have refuted it by a counter demand from Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and could have said, "If there is a God, let Him bring the sun out from the West."

But it is obvious that he could not come out with this counter-demand. The reason is that as soon as he heard the argument, he came to the conclusion that (he himself or anybody else cannot bring out the sun from the East or the West and) it is surely a divine function which proves the existence of God. And once it is proved that it is God who brings the sun out from the East, it necessarily follows from it that He has the power to bring it out from the West also. The king also came to the conclusion that Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is the messenger of Allah, and if the prayed Allah to bring out the sun from the West, Allah will do it, in which case such a miraculous event may bring a revolution against him and he may be deprived of his kingdom. Therefore, he did not make such a demand and having no other answer, was baffled with the argument. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 259

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ وَّهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا ۚ قَالَ أَنَّىٰ
يُحْيِي هَٰذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۖ فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ ۖ قَالَ

كَمْ لَبِثْتَ ۖ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالَ بَلْ لَّبِثْتَ مِائَةَ
عَامٍ فَانْظُرْ اِلٰى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ ۚ وَانْظُرْ اِلٰى
حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ اٰيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ اِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ
نُنْشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوْهَا لَحْمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَعْلَمُ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ
عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝

Or, (did you not see) the example of the one who passed through a town collapsed on its roofs. He said: "How shall Allah revive this after it is dead?" So, Allah made him dead for a hundred years, then raised him saying: "How long did you remain (in this state)?" He said: "I remained (like this) for a day or part of a day". Said He: "Rather, you remained (thus) for a hundred years. Just look at your food and your drink; neither has spoiled. And look at your donkey. And (We did like) this to make you a sign for people -- and look at the bones how We raise them, then dress them with flesh." So, when it was clear to him, he said: "I know that Allah is Powerful over everything." (Verse 259)

Verse 260

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْ كَيْفَ تُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى ۖ قَالَ اَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ
قَالَ بَلٰى وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِيْ ۖ قَالَ فَخُذْ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ
فَصُرْهُنَّ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلٰى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ
ادْعُهُنَّ يَاْتِيْنَكَ سَعْيًا ۖ وَاعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝

And when Ibrāhīm said: "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." He said: "Is it that you do not believe?" He said: "Of course, I do, but it is just that my heart be at peace." He said: "Then, take four birds and tame them to your call, then put on every mountain a part from them, then give them a call, and to you they shall come running. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise." (Verse 260)

Commentary

This is the third story taken up in the above verse (260). The gist of

the story is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham) عليه السلام sought from Allah Almighty the favour of being shown as to how He would bring the dead back to life. Allah Almighty asked him why he had made such a request. Was it because he did not believe in His perfect power which controls everything? Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام explained his true state of mind. In fact, there was no question of his being suspicious about the Resurrection, because the infinite power of Allah is manifest every moment to every sensible person both in the universe and in his own being. However, it is a part of human nature that unless one sees an unusual event happening before his own eyes, he keeps wondering how and in what manner it is going to happen. Such thoughts often disturb one's peace of mind. It was in this context that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام made a request to Allah for witnessing the procedure of the revival of the dead.

Accepting this request, Allah Almighty provided for him an exceptionally unusual scenario for personal sighting which, at the same time, was to show a resolution of all doubts and misgivings the disbelievers nursed. That scenario was activated when he was commanded to get hold of four birds and keep them as pets. When they grow so domesticated that they come to him at his call and he too starts knowing them well enough so that there remains no doubt about a stranger bird taking their place; then he should kill those four birds, make mince-meat of everything -- bones, feathers all included - dividing it in several portions. After that, using his own discretion, he should place one portion each on top of a different hill. Then he was to call them. *Inshallāh*, they shall come back to life by the perfect power of Allah Almighty and come running to him.

In Tafsīr Rūh al-Ma'ānī, on the authority of Ibn al-Mundhir, it has been narrated from Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضی اللہ عنہ that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did what he was commanded to do. When he called them, then in no time, bone to bone, feather to feather, flesh to flesh, everything took its original form, the birds became alive and came running to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام . Allah Almighty said: 'O Ibrāhīm, this is how, on the Day of Resurrection, I shall assemble in no time all parts and bodies, and breath life into them.'

The Qur'ān has used the expression يَأْتِيْنَكَ سَعْيًا :(and to you they shall come running). These particular words mean that the birds will come

running, which tells us that they will not come flying because if they came flying across the sky, the doubt -- that they went out of sight and were replaced in the process -- would remain. Now if they came running on the ground, they will be fully in sight. Through this happening, Allah Almighty made Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام see a sample indicator of life after death, following resurrection, which helped resolve, through visual experience, all doubts expressed by polytheists and disbelievers.

That there is rising after death and that there is life in the Hereafter give disbelievers their greatest difficulty in comprehension. They think man becomes dust after death, then somewhere this dust scatters away with the wind, somewhere it flows away with water, somewhere it reappears in the form of trees and planted fields, so much so that its particles spread out to the far sides of the world. Now to gather these scattered parcels and human parts and to infuse life into them are things short-sighted man finds difficult to understand because he measures everybody on the scale of his own power and status, and does not deliberate in the non-analogous Power above him!

Although, should he peep a little into his own being, he would start seeing that, even today, his existence is a collection of parts and particles spread all over the world. The mother and father through whom man comes into being and the food that goes to make their blood and body are themselves nothing else but particles brought together from different corners of the world. Then comes the post-birth period, deliberation in which will show that the food causing growth, causing formation of blood and flesh is totally composed of different particles coming from all over the world. The milk that man drinks is part of some cow or water buffalo or goat and these composed parts came into those animals through the fodder that they have eaten. Who knows the chaff and grain in their fodder came from which country and who can tell how the winds roaming round the world have introduced particles from many an unnamed land into their nurture. So, one can only marvel in how many ways and from how many corners of the world the perfect power and the precise plan of Allah Almighty has accumulated in the body of one man the whole wide world's produce, its grains and fruits and everything else man eats and uses as medicine, and which become part of his body.

If man, negligent and short-sighted, would for a moment leave the world aside and get on with doing a little research on his own body, he would discover that his being itself is composed of so many parts some of which belong to the East, some to the West, some to the South and still some to the North. Right this day, the precise plan of Divine power has accumulated in his body all those particles scattered around the world, and after death, these particles will disperse again in the same manner. Now, why should it be at all difficult for His perfect power to assemble them a second time? Specially so, when He was the One who had assembled these scattered particles in his being.

Some related questions and their answers

The incident mentioned in the above verse raises certain questions:

1. To begin with, why did Ibrāhīm علیه السلام raise this question at all while he was, in accepting faith in the perfect power of Allah Almighty, the foremost believer out of the whole world of his time?

This has already been answered earlier when it was said that the question raised by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیه السلام was not, in reality, based on any doubt. The purpose of the question was to reaffirm that Allah Almighty will raise the dead on the Day of Resurrection. Given His perfect power, this was not distant or surprising in any manner at all; it was rather absolutely certain. But raising the dead to life is beyond man's power. He never saw a dead person rising to life. Then, the act of raising the dead to life could take different modes and forms. Now it is man's nature that he keeps inquiring into modes and forms of that which he does not know by visual experience. In doing so, his thoughts wander in different directions as a result of which he bears by the pain of mental distraction. The state that helps remove this mental distraction and is replaced by a heart at rest is called *sukūn* or peace. This is what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیه السلام sought through his request.

Incidentally, the difference between *'Imān* (faith) and *Itmi'nān* (peace) also comes out from this discussion. *'Imān* is the name of that voluntary belief or certainty, which man receives about something not seen or known, by trusting the *Rasūl* (messenger of Allah) while *Itmi'nān* refers to peace of the heart. There are times when one does perfectly believe in something not seen, but there is no peace of heart

because its modes and forms are not known. This peace can come only by visual experience. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام was also a perfect believer in life after death -- his question was simply concerned with the modality of man's being raised to life.

2. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام , had simply asked as to how the dead will be raised and had no doubt in the actual raising of the dead, the question is: How can the Divine interrogation: أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِن:'Is it that you do not believe?' be explained? It would seem that there was no occasion for it.

The answer is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had meant to say that there is no doubt in the actual happening, but the question can be taken in two senses, the obvious one relates to this very position, that is, he wished to inquire how the dead will be raised. But the words of the question may also point out to a second sense which is prompted by doubt in or denial of the real power. For instance, you see a heavy package and you are sure that such and such a person cannot lift it and then, to test his capacity, you challengingly tell him -- let's see how you lift it. Since anybody could have taken Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's عليه السلام question in this wrong sense, therefore, Allah Almighty, in order to free Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام from this possibility, addressed him with أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِن so that he could say بَلٰى (*balā*: yes, why not) in reply, and thus get past the ambush laid out by liars and accusers.

3. At least, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's question settles this much that he was not at peace concerning the problem of life after death, although it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه that he said: 'If curtain is raised from that which is unseen, it will add nothing to my certainty and peace since I enjoy perfect peace through my very faith in the unseen'. Now, when some of his followers enjoy such an elevated state of peace how can it be that the very 'friend of Allah' will remain without it?

In this connection, let us be clear that *Itmī'nān* or peace of heart has its own gradations. There is an *Itmī'nān* that the men of Allah (*awliā'* Allah) and the True (*siddīqīn*) have. Then there is an exalted grade of *Itmī'nān* which is given to the general line of prophets عليهم السلام . And there is a grade even above it which is bestowed upon the special ones in the form of visual experience.

Surely, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام had the degree of peace which Sayyidna 'Ali رضى الله عنه had, even a higher degree of *Itmi'nān* which is special to the station of prophethood. In this degree of *Itmi'nān*, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was superior to all his followers. Now what he is respectfully asking for is that highest degree of *Itmi'nān* which is bestowed upon the very special prophets -- as it was with our Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who was granted special *Itmi'nān* by means of a visual experience of Paradise and Hell.

In short, using this question as an excuse to say that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not have peace of heart is not correct. Avoiding that, we can simply say that the absolutely perfect peace of heart which comes in the wake of visual experience was not there and that was why he had made this request.

Towards the end of the verse it was said: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ, that is, Allah Almighty is All-Powerful and All-Wise. Through *'Aziz*, the perfect power of Allah was pointed to, and through *'Hakim'* (the All-Wise), it was indicated that it is in Allah's wisdom that visual experience of life after death is not granted to everyone, otherwise it is not at all difficult for Allah to make every man see it for himself. But, in that case, the superior quality of having faith without seeing (الايمان بالغيب : *al-'imān bi l'ghayb*) will not be there.

Verses 261 - 266

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ اَنْۢبَتَتْ
سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِيْ كُلِّ سُنْۢبُلَةٍ مِّائَةُ حَبَّةٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُضٰعِفُ لِمَنْ
يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۝ اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ
اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُوْنَ مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مَنًّا وَّلَآ اَذًى ۙ لَّهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ
رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۝ قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ
وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَّتْبَعُهَآ اَذًى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيْمٌ ۝
يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُبْطِلُوْا صَدَقٰتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْاَذٰى ۙ كَالَّذِيْ
يُنْفِقُ مَالَهٗ رِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ فَمَثَلُهٗ
كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَاَصَابَهٗ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهٗ صَلْدًا ؕ

لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْكَافِرِينَ O وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ
اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ
فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ O أَيَوَدُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّخِيلٍ
وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ
وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاءُ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ
فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ O

The example of those who spend in the way of Allah is just like a grain that produced seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies for whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.

Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then do not supplement their spending with boasting about favour nor with teasing, they have their reward with their Lord and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.

Saying something proper and forgiving is better than a charity followed by teasing. And Allah is All-Independent, Forbearing.

O those who believe, do not nullify your charities by boasting about favour, and teasing, like the one who spends his wealth to show off before people and does not believe in Allah and in the Last Day. So, his example is like a rock on which there is dust, then came over it a heavy rain and left it barren. They have no ability to gain anything out of what they have done. And Allah does not give guidance to the people who disbelieve.

And the example of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to make firm their souls is like a garden on a hill on which there came a heavy rain and it yielded its produce twofold. Even if there comes no heavy rain, drizzle does. And Allah is watchful of what you do.

Would any of you wish to have a garden of dates and grapes with rivers flowing beneath it, and for him there are all kinds of fruit, and old age befalls him and he has children who are weak, then comes upon it a whirlwind with fire therein, and it is all burnt? This is how Allah makes the signs clear to you so that you may ponder. (Verses 261 - 266)

Commentary

This is the thirty-sixth section of Sūrah Al-Baqarah which begins from verse 262. Left now are five sections of Surah Al-Baqarah out of which the last section carries some basic principles. The earlier four sections, from 262 to 283, have a total of 21 verses which present special instructions and points of guidance concerning financial transactions. If these were to be followed *in toto*, the problem of an ideal economic order which the whole world is worrying about will be automatically solved. Right now we see capitalism, socialism and communism (despite its fall in U.S.S.R) polarizing or readjusting against each other. The confrontation between these systems has reduced the world to a hotbed of internecine aggression. Stated in these verses is an important aspect of the economic order of Islam. It has two parts:

1. It teaches how to spend that which is extra to your needs to help the poor and the needy. This is known as *Ṣadaqah* and *Khayrāt* (roughly translated as charity and alms).

2. It declares that taking and giving of *ribā* (interest, usury) is *ḥaram* (unlawful) and gives directions on how to stay on guard against it.

Out of these sections, the first two consist of the merits of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*, inducement towards these, and related injunctions and points of guidance. The last two sections deal with the unlawfulness and forbiddance of *ribā*-based dealings, and with permissible ways of giving and taking loans.

The verses given above make a three-unit statement as follows:

1. The merit of spending in the way of Allah.

2. Conditions which make *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* acceptable and merit-worthy with Allah.

3. Attitudes that destroy *sadaqah* and *khayrat* when good goes and sin stays.

After that there are two similitudes:

1. The first relates to the charities (*nafaqāt* and *sadaqāt*) which are acceptable with Allah.

2. The second relates to the charities (*nafaqāt* and *sadaqāt*) which are unacceptable and invalid.

Thus, these are five subjects that appear in this section. Before we discuss these subjects, it is necessary to know that the Holy Qur'ān has pointed out to spending in the way of Allah at several places with the word, إِنْفَاقٌ (*infāq*: spending) and at several others, with the words, إِطْعَامٌ (*iṭ'ām*: feeding) or صَدَقَةٌ (*sadaqah*: charity) or إِيْتَاءِ الزَّكٰوةِ (*itā' al-ẓakāt*: paying the obligatory *ẓakāh* properly). A careful look at these Qur'ānic words and the way they have been used shows that the words -- *infāq*, *it'ām* and *sadaqah* -- are general and as such incorporate all sorts of charitable spendings that aim to seek the good pleasure of Allah. These spendings may be *farḍ* and *wājib* (obligatory) or *nafl* and *mustaḥabb* (commendable, or desirable, or preferred). It may be noted that the Qur'ān has used a distinct word إِيْتَاءِ الزَّكٰوةِ for the obligatory *ẓakāh* which indicates that there are special requirements in receiving and giving of this particular *sadaqah*.

In this section, the word used more often is *infāq* while the word, *sadaqah* has been used less often, which indicates that the statement here covers general charities and deeds of generosity, and the injunctions given here include and incorporate all sorts of charities and spendings in the way of Allah.

A similitude of spending in the way of Allah

In the first verse it is said that people who spend in the way of Allah, that is, in *Ḥajj* or in *Jihād*, or on the poor, on widows and orphans, or on relatives and friends to help them out, can be likened to one who sows a good grain of wheat in the field from which grows a plant on which sprout seven ears and each ear yields hundred grains. As a result, one grain was worth a total yield of seven hundred grains.

The outcome is that one who spends in the way of Allah receives in return (reward in the Hereafter) on the scale of one to seven hundred,

that is, spending one cent could bring the merit of seven hundred cents.

It appears in authentic and reliable *aḥādīth* that the *thawab* or merit or reward for one good deed is returned ten-fold, and could reach seven hundred-fold. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said: The reward of spending one *dirham* in *Jihād* and Ḥajj is equal to seven hundred *dirhams*. Ibn Kathīr has reported this with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad.

To sum up, this verse tells us that spending one unit of money brings forth the reward of seven hundred units.

Conditions that make charity a worship

But, the Qur'ān has not, in its wisdom, put this subject in a few clear words. It has rather used the form of a similitude featuring a grain of wheat which has a subtle hint towards the labour of a farmer who can hope to get an yield of seven hundred grains out of one grain sown only when the grain is good, and the farmer sowing it should be fully conversant with the art of farming, and the soil where the grain goes should be good too, because, should even one of these factors remain missing, either this grain will be wasted leaving no grain to come out, or it would just not yield enough to reach the production ratio of one grain to seven hundred grains.

Similar to this, there are the same three conditions for the acceptance and increased return of good deeds generally, and of spending in the way of Allah particularly. These conditions are:

1. That which is spent in the way of Allah should be clean, pure and *ḥalal* (lawful) for it appears in *Ḥadīth* that Allah Almighty accepts nothing except what is clean, pure and *ḥalal*.

2. One who spends should be good in intentions and righteous in deeds. An ill-intentioned and showy spender is like that ignorant farmer who throws away the grain on a spot where it is wasted.

3. The one to whom *sadaqah* (charity) is given should also be deserving of it. It should not be wasted by spending on the non-deserving.

Thus, the similitude unfolds for us the great merit spending in the

way of Allah has, along with the three conditions as well, which stipulate that one should spend from *ḥalal* earnings, and the method of spending should also conform to *Sunnah*, and that one should literally search for the deserving in order to spend on them. Just getting rid of what your coffers hold does not entitle you to receive this merit.

The correct and *masnūn* (according to *Sunnah*) method of giving *sadaqah* has been pointed out in the second verse. It is said that people who spend in the way of Allah and do neither publicise their favour after having spent, nor cause any pain to those on whom they have spent, their reward is secure with their Lord. For them there is no danger in the future, and no sorrow of the past.

Conditions that make charity go in vain

Two negative conditions governing the acceptance of *sadaqah* have been stated in this verse:

1. Do not publicise your favour after spending.

2. Do not consider the receiver practically disgraced, and do nothing to cause him insult or pain.

In the third verse: قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ (saying something proper), these two conditions for acceptance of charitable gifts in the sight of Allah have been further explained. Incidentally, these were introduced in the earlier verse. To repeat, when you spend in the way of Allah, do not show off the favour, and when you give something to somebody do nothing to make him feel insulted, or to cause him pain.

This was explained by saying that it is a thousand times better to offer some reasonable and appropriate excuse before the person who asks, if the giver feels he is unable to give under conditions of duress; and should the person asking anger the giver by impolite behaviour, it is also a thousand times better to forgive than to give him a charity which is followed by giving him pain. Allah Almighty is Himself *Ghanī* and *Ḥalīm*, need-free and forbearing. He needs nothing from anyone. One who spends does so for his own good. That being so, an intelligent human being should keep this in mind while spending in the way of Allah, that he is not favouring anybody, and that he is spending for his own good. And should one sense ingratitude on the part of people

treated well, he should subject himself to the divine attribute of 'forbearing', show obedience and forgive and forget.

In the fourth verse, the same subject has been taken up differently with a little more emphasis. It was said: Do not waste your charities: verbally -- by causing your favour to be known; or practically -- by causing pain.

This makes it clear that any form of favour-flashing or needy-bashing, after an act of charity renders such charity null and void. There is no reward for it.

In this verse, one more condition governing the acceptance of *sadaqah* has been added by saying that one who spends for public exposure, for name and fame, and does not believe in Allah Almighty and the Day of Resurrection, can be likened to be acting in a situation where he sows a grain on a clean rock which has collected a layer of soil, then comes the rain and washes the whole thing clean. Such people will never reap what they have sown and Allah Almighty will not let the disbelievers see the way. From this we know the condition that governs the acceptance of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* -- spend only to seek the good pleasure of Allah Almighty and with the intention of getting *thawāb* (reward) in the *ākhirah* (Hereafter). Never do it with the intention of having public exposure, name and fame. Spending with the intention of earning name and fame is wasting what you spend. And should a true Muslim, who does believe in the Hereafter, expend something simply for name, fame, and under hypocritical motivation, he too, would not get any *thawāb* (reward) for it. Moreover, there is a hint here in the use of the additional sentence ولا يؤمن بالله (And does not believe in Allah); perhaps, it aims to suggest that hypocrisy and name-seeking is not just the sort of thing a person who believes in Allah Almighty and the Day of Resurrection would ever do since hypocrisy is a sign of something being wrong with his faith.

The meaning of وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ : 'Allah Almighty will not show disbelievers the way' towards the end of verse 264 is that the Qur'ānic guidance is universal. It is common to all human beings. But, disbelievers do not take notice of this guidance, rather go a step farther and make fun of it. As a result, Allah Almighty lets them be deprived of the very *taufīq*, the ability to accept guidance. The effect is that they do not accept any guidance.

In verse 265, the fifth under discussion, the acts of charity which

are acceptable in the sight of Allah Almighty as valid spendings, have been illustrated with an example. It is said that those who spend in the way of Allah, solely and sincerely, to seek nothing but His pleasure, and thus fortify their selves with steadfastness, are in a situation where there is a fruit farm located on some mound, then it is hit by heavy rains, then it brings forth double of its usual yield. And should it be that the rain is not that heavy, a light drizzle would become sufficient for it and Allah Almighty sees and knows what you do.

Here the merits of spending in the way of Allah, surely with sincerity of intention, and obedience to conditions set, has been made clear through this similitude. The message is: Spending with good intention and sincerity, even if it be just a little, becomes enough and helps one receive the gains of the Hereafter.

In verse 266, the sixth under discussion, the statement, that *sadaqah* can be rendered void and rejected if one acts against conditions set forth for the acceptance of charitable spendings, has been illustrated with yet another example. It was asked: Does anyone among you like that he owns a fruit farm, growing dates and grapes with streams flowing underneath, and trees laden with all sorts of fruits -- then comes old age for the owner and he has children and a family that cannot stand on their own. Under these conditions comes a whirlwind through the farm with fire in it and which burns the farm out. This is how Allah Almighty brings forth illustrative parallels so that you may think.

It means that spending in charity against given conditions is like hoping to be investing profusely in the Hereafter, but with Allah Almighty this investment comes to naught.

It may be noted that there are a series of qualifications added to this similitude-for instance, 'came his old age, he has children too and the children are young and weak.' These have a purpose. Isn't it that a person, if young, can look forward to having a new farm when his old farm burns out? Then, a person who has no children, and no hope to reactivate his burnt farm, he will not be so worried about his livelihood since a single man can get by even in adversity, one way or the other. Then there is the situation of one who has children, who are good and young with the hope that they would help the father out. In such a situation, a person is not that shocked even if his farm is burnt or plundered since he is free of the needs of his adult children who can

themselves carry him through. In short, these three riding restrictions were introduced to describe the intensity of need when it was said that a person who spent his capital and labour and set up a fruit farm; the farm became ready and started yielding fruit as well. In this condition, came his old age and the days of weakness. Now this person has children and family. The children are very young and weak. Under these circumstances, should the farm he groomed burn out, his shock would be severe and the pain caused would be limitless.

Similarly one who has given his charity with hypocrisy is as if he set up a farm. Then came death after which his condition became equal to that of the old man who cannot earn his living and cannot set up the farm all over again. This is because human deeds cease to be after death. Similarly, an old man with children and family needs that his previous earnings be safe so that they can be used during old age. If, in this condition, his farm and his belongings burn out, there will be no limit to his pain and distress. Very much like this, the *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*, the spendings in charity, which were made hypocritically or for self-promotion, will not come to help him exactly when he would need them most.

Summarising this whole verse, it could be said that *ikhlās* or sincerity is one big condition governing the acceptance of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* with Allah. This sincerity means that one should spend exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah Almighty without any admixture of self-promoting ends.

Now let us look at all the verses in this whole section once again. We shall discover that there are six conditions governing the acceptance, in the sight of Allah, of spendings in His way (*sadaqah* and *khayrāt*). These are:

1. Spend from *ḥalal* belongings.
2. Spend according to the prescribed practice (*Sunnah*).
3. Spend in proper place.
4. Do not remind of favour after having done it.
5. Do nothing to insult the reciever.
6. Spend with sincerity of intention, exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah Almighty, never doing it for the sake of name and fame.

The second condition, that is, spending according to *Sunnah*,

means that one should be careful while spending in the way of Allah that rights due to someone may not be usurped. This is no act of *thawāb* (reward) that one indulges in *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* (charity) by stopping or limiting the necessary expenses on his family without their assent. Depriving the needy inheritors and bequeathing the whole inheritance or giving out everything in *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* is against the teachings of *Sunnah.*

Then there are a thousand forms of spending in the way of Allah. The *sunnah* method requires that the place to spend must be selected carefully giving thought to involved factors of importance, need, urgency etc. Usually people who spend do not bring these into consideration.

The essence of the third condition is that spending at a place or in a cause with even good intention is not good enough. This will not suffice to make it an act of *thawāb*. It is also necessary that the place or cause of spending should be permissible and commendable in the sight of the Sharī'ah. If a person was to bequeath his property for impermissible games and amusements he would be deserving of '*adhāb* (punishment) rather than *thawāb* (reward). This holds good for all other possible avenues of investment which are not desirable in the view of the Sharī'ah.

Verses 267 - 274

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّآ اَخْرَجْنَا
لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ ۠ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيْثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُوْنَ وَلَسْتُمْ
بِاٰخِذِيْهِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تُغْمِضُوْا فِيْهِ ۭ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ○
اَلشَّيْطٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاۗءِ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعِدُكُمْ
مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ○ يُّؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ
يَّشَاۗءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ اُوْتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا ۭ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ
اِلَّآ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ○ وَمَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّفَقَةٍ اَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّذْرٍ
فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُهٗ ۭ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ ○ اِنْ تُبْدُوا
الصَّدَقٰتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ ۚ وَاِنْ تُخْفُوْهَا وَتُؤْتُوْهَا الْفُقَرَاۗءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ

لَّكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنكُم مِّن سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ O
لَّيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا
مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا
تُنفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ O لِلْفُقَرَاءِ
الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي
الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُم
بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا وَمَا تُنفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ
اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ O الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا
وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ O

O those who believe, spend of the good things you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you from the earth, and do not opt for a bad thing, spending only from there, while you are not going to accept it at all, unless you close your eyes to it. And know that Allah is All-Independent, Ever-Praised.

Satan frightens you of poverty and bids you to indecency, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Him, and grace as well. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. He gives wisdom to whom He wills. And whoever is given wisdom is certainly given a lot of good. And only the men of understanding do observe the advice.

And whatever spending you do and whatever vow you make, Allah knows it all. And for the unjust, there are no supporters.

If you make the alms open, it is good enough, and if you keep it secret and give it to the needy, it is far better for you. And this will write off part of your sins. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.

It is not for you to put them on the right path. Rather, Allah puts on the right path whom He wills. And whatever good you spend is for your own selves, and

you shall not spend but to seek the pleasure of Allah. And whatever good you spend, shall be paid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.

(Let your charities be) for the needy who are confined in the way of Allah, unable to move about in the land. An ignorant person takes them to be rich on account of their abstinence. You know them by their appearance. They do not beg people importunately. And whatever good you spend, Allah is All-Aware of it.

Those who spend their wealth night and day, secretly and openly, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. (Verses 267 - 274)

Commentary

The preceding section dealt with spending in the way of Allah. Now further details related to this appear in the seven verses of the present section. These are as follows:

(1) Verse 267: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْفِقُوْا (إلى قوله) غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ :'O those who believe, spend ... Allah is All-Independent, Ever-Praised.'

On the basis of the circumstances in which this verse was revealed, the word: طَيِّبٰتِ (*tayyib*: plural, *tayyibāt*) has been interpreted to mean 'good' since some people used to bring things which were bad and that was why this verse was revealed. Some commentators have interpreted the word, *tayyib* (good) to mean *ḥalal* (lawful) relying on the generality of the word since something is prefectly good only when it is *ḥalal* (lawful) as well. So, according to this interpretation, the verse emphasizes that the thing given in charity must be from one's lawful income. However, according to the first interpretation, the stress on this condition will have to be proved by other sources. Let us remember that this is for a person who has something good yet elects to spend something not good as مَاكَسَبْتُمْ (you have earned) and اَخْرَجْنَا (We have brought forth) do indicate that good things are available with the person making charity, while the sentence لَاتَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيْثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُوْنَ (and do not opt for a bad thing spending only from there) proves the spending of something not good deliberately. As for the one who just does not possess anything good, he shall be exempted from this prohibition. His giving, even if it be bad, shall be accepted.

Some scholars have deduced from the expression, مَاكَسَبْتُمْ (what you

have earned), the ruling that it is permissible for the father to eat out of the earnings of his son. This is based on a *hadith*:

أولادكم من طيب أكسابكم فكلوا من أموال أولادكم هنيئا

Your children are a good part of your earnings, so eat out of the income of your children cheerfully. (Qurtubi)

Injunctions relating to the lands of *'Ushr*

The word اخرجنا (*akhrajna*: We have brought forth) in مِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ (What We have brought forth for you from the earth) hints that *'ushr* is obligatory on *'ushri* lands. Based on the generality of this verse, Imam Abu Hanifah has deduced that *'ushr* is *wajib* or obligatory on every produce, big or small, yielded by *'ushri* land. The verse وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ (And pay the due thereof on the day of its harvest; 6:141) in Surah Al-An'am is open and clear in support of the obligatory nature of *'ushr*.

'Ushr (عشر : the tenth or twentieth part) and *Kharaj* (خراج : land tax) are two technical terms used in Islamic Shari'ah. There is a common factor between these two. Both have an aspect of tax in them when levied on lands by an Islamic state. However, there is a difference. *'Ushr* is not just a tax. On the contrary, its real nature is more of an act of monetary *'Ibadah* (worship) than tax. This is similar to *Zakah*, for which reason, it is also called زكوة الارض (*zakah al-ard*: the *zakah* of the land). *Kharaj* is straight tax which carries no aspect of *'Ibadah*. Since Muslims are capable of *'ibadah* and are obligated to do that, the part of land-produce taken from them is known as *'Ushr*. Since non-Muslims are not obligated with *'Ibadah*, that which is levied on their lands is named *Kharaj*. There is another practical difference between *Zakah* and *'Ushr* -- *Zakah* becomes due on gold, silver and goods of commercial value after the passage of one year while *'Ushr* becomes obligatory immediately after the produce is harvested from the land.

There is yet another difference -- *'Ushr* is dropped if the land produces nothing, but *Zakah* remains obligatory at the end of the year on gold, silver and goods of commercial value even if there is no profit at all. This is not the place to discuss details relating to the problems of *'Ushr* and *Kharaj*. These can be seen in books of *Fiqh*. Incidentally, this humble writer has discussed this subject in some details in his book, *Nizam al-Aradi* which also contains special injunctions concerning lands in Pakistan and India.

(2) Verses 268-269: اَلشَّيْطٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ (الى قوله) وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّآ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ : "Satan frightens you of poverty ... and only the men of understanding do observe the advice."

When a person is obsessed with the idea that spending in charity will cause him poverty, when he does not pick up the courage to go ahead and spend - even after hearing the warning of Allah Almighty - and continues feeling that he should not spend out of what he has, and when, turning away from the Divine promise, his mind takes him to rely on the promise of Satan, he should better be sure that this apprehension of his is being generated by Satan. He should never say that he has never seen Satan, so how could he take orders from him? Conversely, should he come to think that not only his sins will be forgiven by spending in charities, but also his wealth will be blessed with increase - he should then be sure that this thought has come from Allah for which he should be grateful to Him. Allah's treasure never runs short. He knows fully well - the open, the hidden, the intentions, the deeds - everything about everyone.

Al-Ḥikmah: Meaning and Explanation

(3) Verse 269: يُؤْتِى الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ : "He gives wisdom to whom He wills."

The word, الحكمة (*al-ḥikmah*: wisdom) appears repeatedly in the Holy Qur'ān, and at every place, its meaning has been explained differently. In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, all positions taken by commentators have been assembled at this point. These come to nearly thirty, however, towards the end it was said that all these positions are close together and there is no contradiction among them. The only difference is that of interpretations. The word, *ḥikmah* is the verbal noun of *'iḥkam* (the first letter, *hamzah* with *kasrah*) which means 'to complete what is said or done with all its properties and requisites.'

This is why the verse وَاٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ : 'And Allah gave him the kingdom and the *ḥikmah*' (2:251) which concerns Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام, was explained in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ in the following manner:

The real meaning of *ḥikmah* is to place everything whereto it belongs and this can only be accomplished ideally through prophethood. Therefore, *ḥikmah* has been interpreted as prophethood here.

Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said in *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*: "When the word, *ḥikmah* is used for Allah Almighty, it denotes the

comprehensive knowledge and solid creative excellence of all things; and when attributed to the non-Divine, it means the rightly-guided knowledge of what exists, and the action which corresponds to it.

This sense has been interpreted in different words. Somewhere it means, the Qur'ān; elsewhere, the *Ḥadīth*. Then at different places, it carries different meanings, such as "the authentic knowledge", "the righteous deed", "the True Word", "the wisdom", "the understanding of religion", "correctness of opinion" and "the fear of Allah". Incidentally, the last meaning appears in *Ḥadīth* as well: رأس الحكمة خشية الله , that is, "the real wisdom is the fear of Allah". The word, *ḥikmah* in the verse يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (teaches them the Book and the wisdom - 3:164) has been explained as "*Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*" by the *Ṣaḥābah* and the *Tābi'īn* (the Companions and the Successors). Some commentators hold the opinion that *ḥikmah* in the verse يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ (whoever is given wisdom) under discussion covers all these things.

This is the more evident view; more so, since the words of the Qur'ān وَمَنْ يُّؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا : "And whoever is given wisdom is certainly given a lot of good" do hint in that direction as they mean that the *ḥikmah* covers a lot of good. Allah knows best.

(4) Verse 270: وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّفَقَةٍ (الى قوله) وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ : "And whatever spending you do ... and for the unjust, there are no supporters."

Here, "and whatever spending you do" covers all spendings - those in which all related conditions are observed and those too, in which all or some conditions are not observed. For instance, it may not be in the way of Allah but be in the ways of sin; or the act of giving may be mixed up with hypocrisy; or may be followed by making a show of the favour before the receiver; or it may not be *ḥalal* (lawful) and good.

Similarly, all votive offerings (نذور : *nudhūr*) come under the general purview of نذر (*nadhr*: singular: votive offering), for instance, it includes the *nadhr* of monetary *'ibādah* in accordance with which *nadhr* has been introduced alongwith *infāq* (spending) and may also include *nadhr* of physical *'ibādah*. It may be absolute, or dependent on something else; or it may or may not have been fulfilled. The purpose of saying all this is that Allah Almighty knows all these things and He shall recompense for them duly. This was made known so that people are persuaded to observe limits and conditions and be warned of their

non-observance. The word الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (*al-zalimin*) in the text refers to the unjust, the transgressors, who do not observe the necessary conditions. To them was given clear warning.

(5) Verse 271: إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقٰتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ (إلى قوله) وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ : "If you give the alms openly, it is good enough, ... and Allah is All-Aware of what you do".

Obviously, this verse covers all types of charity, whether obligatory or supererogatory, and it is more preferable to perform all of them as secretly as possible. To observe secrecy in a charitable act has religious merits, because it is far from the possibility of *riya'* (show off), and more graceful for the receiver who can feel shy about receiving charity in public. It is also beneficial from an earthly point of view, because it does not disclose the amount of wealth one owns.

It should, however, be kept in mind that the preferability of observing secrecy is a matter of principle. There may be situations where it becomes more preferable to perform an act of charity openly for some external reasons, such as removing some accusation (of not paying *zakah*, for instance) or to persuade others to follow the example. Such exceptional cases do not negate the basic principle in any way.

Immediately after the instruction of concealing the '*Sadaqat*', the holy verse says, يُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ (This will write off part of your sins). It does not mean that the expiation of evil-deeds is confined to the charity made in secret only. In fact, a charity made in public also carries the same benefit. But the reference to expiation here is in the context that even if someone feels a secret charity as useless in this world, he should not feel depressed, because Allah will forgive his sins, and that is a great gain for him.

(6) Verse 272: لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدٰىهُمْ (إلى قوله) وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ : "It is not for you to put them on the right path ... and you shall not be wronged."

It has been clarified in this verse that a *sadaqah* given to a non-Muslim also carries a reward in the life to come. As the basic purpose of a Muslim in making a *sadaqah* is to get that reward, he should not confine himself to giving it to the Muslims only and to avoid giving it to the poor non-Muslims in the hope that this attitude will persuade them towards Islam, because a Muslim is not charged

with bringing non-Muslims to the right path. He should seek his own benefit (the reward in the Hereafter) which can also be achieved through giving *sadaqah* to a non-Muslim.

Let us be clear at this point that *sadaqah* referred to here is *nafl* (supererogatory or voluntary charity) which can be given to a *dhimmī* (a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state) as well. The obligatory *Zakāh* is not meant here since it is not permissible to give that to anyone except a Muslim (Mazharī). It is not permissible to give any kind of *sadaqah* to a *ḥarbī* (a non-Muslim citizen of a non-Muslim state) and, however, it is permissible to give the *dhimmis* all other types of *sadaqat*, obligatory or supererogatory. *Zakāh* is not included in the verse.

(7). Verse 273: لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ أُحْصِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (الی قوله) فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ : "For the needy who are confined in the way of Allah ... Allah is All-Aware of it'.'

Here the word, *al-fuqarā'* (the needy: those who need support for their physical sustenance) covers all those who cannot engage themselves in other jobs because of their religious preoccupation.

... يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَآءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ ... : "An ignorant person takes them to be rich on account of their abstinence."

This verse tells us that a *faqīr* (the one who does not own the *nisab* of *zakāh*) wearing expensive dress will not be taken as 'need-free' because of that. Instead, he would be regarded as *faqīr*. Paying *Zakāh* to such a person will be correct. (Qurṭubī)

... تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيْمَاهُمْ ... : "You know them by their appearance."

This tells us that it is correct to give rulings based on circumstancial evidence. For instance, if a dead body is found wearing *zunnar* (waist-cord which is a symbol of some pagan religions), and is uncircumcised, it will not be buried in the graveyard of Muslims. (Qurṭubī)

... لَا يَسْئَلُوْنَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا ... :"They do not beg people importunately."

On the surface, this verse gives the sense that they do not solicit importunately but it does not negate soliciting without importunity, as is the actual interpretation of some commentators. But, in accordance with the consensus of commentators, it means that they just do not ask; لأنهم متعففون عن المسألة عفة تامة (totally refrain from asking) (Qurṭubī).

(8). Verse 274: اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ : "Those who spend their wealth night and day."

Presented in this verse is the great reward and excellence of those who are used to spending in the way of Allah. They are those who, under all conditions and circumstances, during the day and during the night, secretly and openly, keep spending in the way of Allah in all sorts of ways. By implication, it was also stated that there is no time fixed for charities, i.e., *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. There is no restriction of night or day. Similarly, spending in the way of Allah, secretly and openly, is an act of *thawāb* both ways, however, the condition is that it should be done with sincerity (*ikhlās*), and not to earn name and fame. The excellence of spending secretly is limited to a situation where there be no pressing need to spend out openly; and where such a need does exist, spending there openly is certainly better.

Based on the authority of Ibn 'Asākir, there is a report in Rūh al-Ma'ānī which says that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ spent forty thousand *dinars* in the way of Allah - making it ten thousand during the day, ten thousand during the night, ten thousand openly and ten thousand secretly. Some commentators have said that this very event related to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ was the background of the revelation of this verse. There are other views also regarding the circumstances of its revelation.

Verses 275 - 281

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَاْكُلُوْنَ الرِّبٰوا لَا يَقُوْمُوْنَ اِلَّا كَمَا يَقُوْمُ الَّذِىْ يَتَخَبَّطُهُ
الشَّيْطٰنُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبٰوا ۘ
وَاَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبٰوا ؕ فَمَنْ جَآءَهٗ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ
فَانْتَهٰى فَلَهٗ مَا سَلَفَ ؕ وَاَمْرُهٗٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ
اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ O يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا وَيُرْبِى
الصَّدَقٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ اَثِيْمٍ O اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ O يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَذَرُوْا مَا بَقِىَ مِنَ الرِّبٰوٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ O

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۖ وَإِن تُبْتُمْ
فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ○ وَإِن كَانَ
ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ ۚ وَأَن تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ إِن كُنتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ ○ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ○

Those who take *ribā* (usury or interest) will not stand but as stands the one whom the demon has driven crazy by his touch. That is because they have said: "Trading is but like *ribā*." And Allah has permitted trading, and prohibited *ribā*. So, whoever receives an advice from his Lord and stops, he is allowed what has passed, and his matter is upto Allah. And the ones who revert back, those are the people of Fire. There they remain for ever.

Allah destroys *riba* and nourishes charities. And Allah does not like any sinful disbeliever. Surely those who believe and do good deeds, establish *Salāh* and *Zakāh* have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.

O those who believe, fear Allah and give up what still remains of the 'riba' if you are believers. But if you do not, then listen to the declaration of war from Allah and His Messenger. And if you repent, yours is your principal. Neither you wrong, nor be wronged.

And if there be one in misery, then deferment till ease. And that you leave it as alms is far better for you, if you really know. And be fearful of a day when you shall be returned to Allah, then everybody shall be paid, in full, what he has earned. And they shall not be wronged. (Verses 275 - 281)

The prohibition of *Riba*

From these verses begins the description of the forbiddance of *ribā* and the injunctions relating to its unlawfulness. This issue is very important from different angles. On the one hand, there are the severe warnings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and on the other, it has been taken today as an integral part of the world economy. The desired

liberation from it seems to be infested with difficulties. The problem is very detail-oriented and has to be taken up in all possible aspects.

First of all we have to deliberate into the correct interpretation of these verses of the Qur'ān and into what has been said in authentic *aḥādīth* and then determine what *ribā* is in the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, what transactions it covers, what is the underlying wisdom behind its prohibition and what sort of harm it brings to society.

The second aspect of *ribā* is intellectual and economic. Is it true that *ribā* guarantees the economic development of the world, so much so, that its suspension will categorically result in the destruction of trade and general economic activity? Or, this whole evil cycle is nothing but the brain-child of those heedless of Allah Almighty and the Hereafter. Otherwise, all economic problems can be solved without it as well. Going a step further, we can even say that the economic peace in the world depends on the elimination of *ribā*, let alone the resolution of its problems. *Ribā* is the greatest cause of the economic maladies of the world.

This second aspect involves the discussion of an economic problem under which come long debates which are not related to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, therefore, we shall restrict ourselves to dealing with the first aspect only, which requires no less details either.

Here we have a total of six verses which state the prohibition of *ribā* and set forth related injunctions. Out of these, the first sentence of the first verse points out to the sad end of those involved in *ribā* transactions and to the disgraceful and dishevelled nature of their rising on the day of resurrection. It is said that those who consume *ribā* do not stand except like a man who has been driven crazy by the embrace of some satan or jinn. It appears in *ḥadīth* that the word, *la yaqumunā* or 'do not stand' means the rising of the dead from their graves on the day of resurrection in the sense that the dealer in *ribā*, when he rises from his grave, will rise like the mad man who has been driven crazy by some satan or jinn.

The first thing we find out from this sentence is that a human being can faint or go mad under the influence of jinns and satans and

the observations of those who have had such experience prove it. Ḥāfiz Ibn Qaiyyim al-Jawziyyah رحمه الله has confirmed that physicians and philosophers have conceded that epilepsy, fainting or madness are caused by several different reasons, one of which, at times, could also be the input of jinns and satans. Those who reject this have no other argument in their favour except that obviously it is too far out to believe.

The second point to be noted here is that the Qur'ān does not say that the consumers of *ribā* will rise in a state of madness or insanity. Instead, it refers to a peculiar condition of lunacy or fit or stupefaction - as if someone has been embraced by Satan and driven crazy. Perhaps, this carries the hint that a person struck with lunacy or fit is, at times, found inactive and silent while usually these people will not be found in that dormant state. Instead, they would be identified by their ranting, raving and crazy doings as a result of the satanic touch.

Perhaps, there might be yet another hint here. It is commonly noticed that human senses come to a flat nothing after fainting or insanity following a sickness; the very feeling of pain or punishment is just not there. But these people will not be found in that inert state. On the contrary, they would feel, with full sensitivity, the pain and the punishment like one shadowed by a demon.

Now, at this point, we have to look for a certain compatibility in crime and punishment. When punishment comes from Allah Almighty, for a person or group, against a certain crime, it is certainly appropriate to the crime. Therefore, raising the consumers of *ribā*, without sense, on the day of resurrection is perhaps indicative of a certain parallelism. Isn't it that the consumer of *ribā* is so drunk with his greed for money that he is neither kind to anyone poor, nor does he blush before anyone for what he does? Since he was really senseless during his lifetime in the world, he was raised on the day of resurrection in that same condition. Or, may be, he was so punished because, in the mortal world, he demonstrated his lack of reason as reason, that is, he declared *ribā* to be like trade; therefore, he was made to rise all deprived of his sanity.

Also noteworthy here is the fact that the verse uses the expression *ya'kūluna* or 'eating' of *ribā* and, by application, means the taking and

using of *ribā*. This may be in eating or clothing or housing and its furnishings. But, it was identified with the act of 'eating' because that which is eaten cannot possibly be retrieved, contrary to other type of uses where things can be taken back. Therefore, total possession and monopoly are expressed through the word, 'eating'. This metaphor is found, not only in the Arabic language, but in Urdu, Persian and several other languages (English: 'eat', or the stronger word, 'devour').

After that, comes the second sentence, in which, giving the reason for this punishment of the consumers of *ribā*, it has been said that these people have committed two crimes. One: They consumed the prohibited (*ḥaram*) by dealing in *riba*. Two: They took it to be lawful (*ḥalal*) and, in reply to those who declared it to be *ḥaram*, they said that buying and selling is very much like *ribā*. Just as 'profit' is derived from *riba*, so is profit derived from buying and selling. If *ribā* is *ḥaram*, trade should be *ḥaram* too, although it is not prohibited in the sight of anyone.

Here, given the dictates of the situation, they might have said that *riba* is also like trade so, when trade is *ḥalal*, *ribā* should be *ḥalal* too. But they, by changing the style of their statement, took a sort of mocking plunge at those who said that *ribā* was *ḥaram*, thereby telling them in effect - 'if you say *riba* is *ḥaram*, then you must say that trade is also *ḥaram*'.

In the third sentence, in reply to what these people said, Allah Almighty negated their position by saying that these people regard *ribā* as equal to trade, although there is a world of difference between the two in accordance with the will and command of Allah Almighty. When He has made the one *ḥalal* and the other, *haram* - how could they be equal?

Keeping this reply in mind, we should note that the objection raised by those people (the defenders of *ribā*) was based on a purely rational argument. They were simply saying that since both activities aimed at earning profit, their governing injunction should also be one and the same. Praise be to Allah Almighty that He did not answer their rational doubt by a parallel rational explanation. Rather on the contrary, answering in His wisdom, He said that Allah Almighty is the absolute, sovereign master of all and He alone knows the harm and

benefit, the good and bad of everything, most comprehensively. When He declares something to be *ḥalal*, and something else to be *ḥaram*, you should immediately realize that there must be some loss or harm or evil in that which has been declared *ḥaram*, even if one does or does not see through it. This is because the actual reality of this whole system, and the benefit and harm that lies therein, can only be encompassed by the same *'Ālim* (the Knower) and *Khabīr* (the Aware), from Whose reach of knowledge the minutest particle of the world cannot escape. The individuals or groups in this world can identify their expedient gains and their losses, but they just cannot claim to have encompassed the entire range of benefits and harms affecting the whole wide world. There are things that appear to be beneficial for a certain person or group but, when looked at in the perspective of the whole nation or country, the same things prove to be harmful.

Following that, it is said in the third sentence that a person, who had collected some money before *ribā* was declared *ḥaram*, and who repented after *ribā* was declared *ḥaram*, and promised to himself that he would not go near it in the future, he then, will find that the amount so collected belonged to him based on the outward dictate of the Sharī'ah. Now remains the inward affair, that of his sincere, heart-felt abstinence, or that of his possible hypocritical repentance, that will be retired as a matter between him and His Lord. If the repentance comes from the heart, it will be beneficial in the sight of Allah, otherwise it will pass into nothingness. Common people have no right to doubt about it. However, one who hears good counsel, yet elects to revert to the same erroneous pattern of word and deed, for such people Hell is the place to go since this act of eating *riba* is a sin. And since their saying, that *ribā* is *ḥalal* like trade, is *kufr*, they will, for that reason, live in Hell for ever.

In the second verse (276), it was said that Allah Almighty eradicates *ribā* and lets *sadaqāt* (charities) grow. Here *sadaqat* were introduced with *riba* by virtue of a unique congruity. It will be noted that there is contradiction in the very nature of *riba* and *sadaqah*, then their outcomes are also contradictory, and generally, those who engage in these two have contradictory intentions and objectives.

The contradiction in nature can be explained by the fact that in

sadaqah one gives to others what belongs to him without any reward or return, while in *ribā*, that which belongs to others is taken without any compensation or return. The intention and the objective of those who are engaged in these two activities is contradictory because one who gives *sadaqah* elects to lessen or exhaust what belongs to him exclusively for seeking the pleasure of Allah Almighty and for earning merit in the Hereafter; while the *ribā*-taker is eager to collect impermissible increase on the capital he already has. That the outcome of both is contradictory is made clear by this verse which says that Allah Almighty erases the gains obtained through *ribā* or takes away its *barakah* (blissful abundance); and increases the wealth, or its *barakah* for the giver of *sadaqah*. The result is that the objective of the greedy in pursuit of wealth is not achieved, while one who spends in the way of Allah, and who was quite happy with a little decrease in his belongings, finds it full of Divine *barakah* whereby his wealth increases, or its end-products do, and their benefits accumulate.

At this point, it may be interesting to find out what is the meaning of erasing *ribā* and increasing *sadaqāt* in the verse. Some commentators have said that this erasing and increasing relates to the Hereafter where the *ribā*-consumer will find his wealth of no avail; it might as well become a curse for him; while those who are engaged in acts of *sadaqah* and *khayrāt* will find that their wealth has become a source of eternal blessings. This is absolutely obvious in which there is no doubt. However, according to the consensus of commentators, the position is that the erasing of *ribā* and the increasing of *sadaqah* is most certainly related to the Hereafter, but some of its traces are observed in this world as well.

The money or property of which *ribā* becomes a part is sometimes destroyed taking with it all that was before it. This is a common sight in markets of *ribā* and stocks where millionaires and capitalists of yesterday become insolvents and paupers of today. No doubt, there are chances of profit and loss in *ribā*-free business activities and there are many businessmen who face losses in business deals but a loss that turns a millionaire into a beggar is witnessed only in *ribā* markets and stock exchanges. There are so many statements of the experienced and the knowledgeable which say that the wealth collected through *ribā*

may increase faster and higher, but it generally does not survive long enough to run through children and their successors. In between, comes some calamity and effaces everything out. Sayyidna Ma'mar said that they have heard from their elders that forty years hardly pass on the *ribā*-consumer when *muhaq* (major loss) overtakes his wealth.

May be, the wealth or property does not go to ruins outwardly, but this much is quite certain that its benefits, utilities, and blessings will go away. Since this is no secret that gold and silver are not desirable or useful as such. They cannot remove hunger or thirst. They cannot help beat the heat or serve as quilt and wrap in winter. Neither can they be used as clothes or utensils. The only purpose for which a wise person goes through thousands of exercises to procure and secure these can hardly be anything else except that gold and silver are means to procure things that go to make man's life pleasant and that he may live a life of comfort and self-respect. Then comes man's natural wish that his children and relatives should also enjoy the same comfort and self-respect as he did.

These are the sort of things that can be called the benefits and utilities of wealth and property. As a result, we can safely say that one who procures these benefits and utilities has his wealth increased in a sense, even though it may appear to have decreased, and one who procures these benefits and utilities on a lower scale has his wealth decreased in a sense even though it may appear to have increased.

After having understood this, let us compare the two activities of *ribā* dealings and *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. It will soon be noticed that the wealth of the *ribā*-consumer, no doubt, appears to be increasing, but that increase is akin to the swelling of the human body. The increase in swelling is after all an increase of the body itself. But no sane person would like to have this sort of increase because he knows that this increase is a certain knock of death. Similarly, no matter how increased is the wealth of the *ribā*-consumer, he remains, for ever, deprived of its fruits, that is, comfort and honour.

Perhaps, at this point, a doubt may bother someone in view of the comfort and status enjoyed by the *ribā*-consumers of today. Here they are with their mansions and villas, living in every luxury money can

buy, attended by servants and maids, having the best to eat, drink and sleep - necessities and absurdities all rolled in one. A little thought here would lead every sane person to differentiate between the articles of comfort and comfort itself. There is a big difference between the two. The articles of comfort are made in factories and sold in markets. These can be procured aginst gold and silver, but that which is known as comfort, peace and bliss, is neither made in any factory nor sold in any market. This is mercy (*rahmah*) which comes directly from Allah Almighty. There are occasions when this cannot be procured no matter how much one holds in his possession. Just think of the comfort of a sound sleep. In order to have it, we can certainly do our best - make a sleep-oriented house which is the best possible, perfect arrangement of air and light, cooling, heating, handsome looking furniture, the bed, the mattress, the pillows, all chosen ideally - but can we be sure that sleep will come just because all this helpful paraphernalia is there? If you have never personally experienced this, there are thousands who cannot sleep due to some disease, and who would say no. Reports from a country, so wealthy and 'civilized' as USA, reveal that seventy per cent people cannot sleep without sleeping pills. There are times when even these do not work. You can buy from stores things to make you sleep but you cannot buy sleep from any store at any price. Similar is the case of other articles of comfort and enjoyment. You can buy these articles against money but it is not necessary that you do experience comfort and enjoyment.

Again, after having understood this, if we look closely at what happens to the consumers of *ribā*, we shall find that they have everything in the world except what we know as real peace and comfort. So intoxicated they are in turning their ten million into fifteen and fifteen into twenty that they have no time to eat, or dress up, or be with their wives and children. There are factories to take care of. There are foreign ships to watch. Anxieties after anxieties chase them day and night. With them they sleep and with them they rise. How terrible of these crazy people who have confused comfort with articles of comfort, and therefore, they are far far away from it.

This is a view of their so-called 'comfort'. Now let us think of their ideas of status, prestige and fair name. The fact is that such people

become hard-hearted and merciless. Taking advantage of the poverty of the poor and the low income of the low-income people becomes their very occupation. Like parasites, they suck their blood to feed their own bodies. Since that is that, it is just not possible that people will ever respect them. Revealing are the accounts of the money-lenders of India and the Jews of Syria. If you see them as they are, you will find that their coffers are filled with gold and silver and precious stones yet they are given no respect in any group of human beings in any corner of the world. Moreover, the inevitable outcome of this cruel practice of theirs is that the poor start grudging and hating them, so much so that in the world of today most wars are an expression of this grudge and hate. It is the confrontation between labour and capital that introduced the ideologies of socialism and communism in the world. The subversive activities of communism are a result of this grudge and hate. The whole world has become a burning cauldron of killings and confrontations because of these. This much accounts for their personal comfort and social prestige. Experience bears out that *ribā*-earnings never make even the life of their children pleasant. Either the earnings go to waste or, because of its curse, they too, remain disgraced and deprived of the real fruits of wealth. People may perhaps be deceived by the example of the *ribā*-consumers of the West, wondering how rich they all are and how do their next and their next generations flourish. To this, I have already answered by presenting a brief outline of their so-called prosperity.

Here it can only be added that they really are like some man-eater who nurses his body by feeding on the blood of other human beings, and then a group of some such people go to live in a community of their own, and you take someone to that locality to show him how healthy and prosperous all of them happen to be. But an intelligent visitor who is interested in the welfare of humanity will never want to limit his visit to this locality alone; on the contrary, he would also want to see those localities where the blood of people has been sucked dry leaving them half dead. One who has seen the totality of such localities can never be happy with the locality of fat man-eaters. He can never say that this act of theirs is the way of human progress; on the contrary, he will have no option but to declare this as destruction of all that is human.

Set against this is the case of those who give *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. You will never find them running after money so anxiously. They may have lesser articles of comfort but they shall be found having more satisfaction and peace of heart, which is real comfort, as compared to those who have all those supporting articles. Consequently, they shall be looked at with respect and admiration by every human being of the world.

يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا وَ يُرْبِى الصَّدَقٰتِ

Allah destroys *riba* and nourishes charities.

In short, the above statement of the verse is very clear in relation to the Hereafter. However, if we wish to understand, with a little effort, it is equally open in respect of this worldly life. This is what is meant by the *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إن الربو و إن كثر فإن عاقبته تصير إلى قل

No matter how much *ribā* increases, it will decrease ultimately. (Musnad Ahmad and Ibn Majah)

At the end of the verse (276), it is said: وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ اَثِيْمٍ which means that Allah Almighty does not like any disbeliever, any sinner. Here it has been indicated that those who just do not hold *ribā* as *ḥaram* have fallen into *kufr* (disbelief); and those who do know it to be *ḥaram*, yet get involved with it, are sinners, transgressors or *fāsiq*.

The third verse (277) mentions the great reward of peace and comfort that awaits the truly believing and practising Muslims, who are steadfast in *Salāh* and *Zakāh*. Since, in the verse previous to this, the punishment of Hell and the disgrace the consumers of *ribā* will be facing was mentioned, so in accordance with the general style of the noble Qur'ān, the merit - in *Ākhirah* - of the believing-practising Muslims, those steadfast in *Salāh* and *Zakāh*, was mentioned alongside.

The gist of the fourth verse (278): يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ ذَرُوْا مَا بَقِىَ مِنَ الرِّبٰوٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ : "O those who believe, fear Allah and give up what still remains of the *ribā* if you are believers" is that, after the revelation that prohibited *ribā*, the giving and taking of the amount of *ribā* that remained due against anyone was also prohibited.

Explaining this, it can be said that *ribā* was rampant all over

Arabia before it was prohibited by revelation. When verses earlier than the present one brought forth its prohibition, Muslims - following their Qur'ān-oriented habit - abandoned all their *ribā*-related dealings. But some people had claims of unpaid *ribā* amounts on some others. In that connection, it so happened that Banū Thaqif and Banū Makhzūm, two Arab tribes, had mutual *ribā* dealings and people from Banū Thaqif had claims of unpaid *ribā* amounts against Banū Makhzūm. When Banū Makhzum became Muslims they, after having made their commitment to Islam, thought it to be impermissible to pay back the amount of *ribā* due. On the other side were Banū Thaqif; their people started pressing their claim. Since these people had become Muslims, but did have a mutual peace agreement, the people of Banū Makhzum told them that they had now entered the fold of Islam and had no intention of spending their Islamic earnings in paying off *ribā*.

This dispute rose in Makkah. That was a time after the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضى الله عنه (according to another report, Sayyidna 'Attab ibn 'Asid رضى الله عنه) was the Amir of Makkah, governor of the city, appointed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ . He reported this dispute in writing to him requesting his guidance. It was in this background that this verse of the Qur'ān was revealed, the gist of which is that all previous dealings involving *ribā* should be terminated after entry into the fold of Islam, also no previous *ribā* amount should be realized. The principal was all that could be taken.

When this Islamic law was enforced, the Muslims were already bound by it. The non-Muslim tribes who had accepted the Islamic law as party in peace treaties, they too, were bound by it. But, in spite of this, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ announced this law in his famous Address of the Last Hajj (حجة الوداع), he made it a point to say that this law does not carry behind it the financial interest of any individual, or nation, or Muslims themselves. This has been brought into force to reconstruct, reform and better the whole humanity. Therefore, first of all, we let go large amounts of *ribā* owed by non-Muslims to Muslims. Now they too should have no excuse in leaving off the amount of *ribā* they claimed. As he said in his Address:

ألا أن كل ربا كان فى الجاهلية موضوع عنكم كله لكم رءوس أموالكم
لاتظلمون ولا تظلمون و أول ربا موضوع ربا العباس بن عبد المطلب كله
(ابن كثير بحواله ابن أبى حاتم)

which means that the *ribā* content of all *ribā* dealings made in the age

of ignorance stood forsaken. Now everyone will get the principal and no one will get the extra amount of *ribā*. 'Neither shall you be able to do injustice to anyone by charging an increased amount, nor shall anyone be able to do injustice to you by decreasing the amount of your principal.' And the first *ribā* that was surrendered was the *ribā* of Sayyidnā 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib رضى الله عنه , large amounts of which were due on non-Muslims in the form of *ribā*.

The subject verse refers to this happening and sets out the injunction to leave off all standing *ribā* amounts.

As the verse opens addressed to Muslims, they were first given the command of اِتَّقُوااللّٰهَ that is, 'fear Allah.' Given after that was the injunction covering the real issue. This is the same unique style of the Qur'ān which distinguishes it from all the law books of the world. When a law, which is somewhat difficult to act upon, is given, it has the prefixes and suffixes of accountability of deeds before Allah Almighty, and the punishment and reward of the Hereafter, so that Muslim minds and hearts become prepared to act upon it; the injunction is announced after that. Here too, the forsaking of the amount of matured *ribā* could weigh heavy on human disposition, therefore, said first was اِتَّقُوااللّٰهَ (fear Allah). After that, came the injunction: ذَرُوْا مَا بَقِىَ مِنَ الرِّبٰوا that is, 'leave off *ribā* that remains.' Towards the end of the verse it was said: اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ that is, 'if you are believers.' Here it was indicated that *'Īmān* (faith, belief) requires that Divine injunctions should be followed faithfully. Acting otherwise negates *'Īmān*. Since this injunction was somewhat heavy on temperaments, اِتَّقُوااللّٰهَ (Fear Allah) was added before it, and اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (If you are believers) after it.

After that, in the fifth verse (279), severe warning has been given to those who act contrary to this injunction. They are told if they do not abandon *ribā*, they must face a declaration of war from Allah Almighty and His Messenger. So severe is this warning that any other warning of such severity does not appear anywhere in the Qur'ān in relation to any other sin, no matter how great, except *kufr* (disbelief), of course. The verse then closes with the words: وَاِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوْسُ اَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُوْنَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ that is, 'if you repent and resolve to leave off the remaining amount of *ribā* in future, you will get your principal.

Neither will you be able to do injustice to anyone by extracting more than your principal, nor will anyone be able to do injustice to you by decreasing or delaying the return of your principal.' Here the receipt of the principal has been conditioned by saying that you repent, and resolve that you will abandon *ribā* in future, and only then, you shall get your principal.

Evidently this indicates if repentance (*Taubah*) was not done by resolving to give up *ribā*, receiving the principal will no more be in order. Here are the related details. Take the case of a person who just does not believe that *ribā* could be *ḥaram* and therefore, he does not repent and resolve that he will have nothing to do with *ribā* anymore - then this person goes out of the fold of Islam and becomes an apostate (مرتد : *murtadd*). The injunction governing an apostate is that his belongings go out of his possession. As a consequence, that which he has earned during the period he was a Muslim, goes to his Muslim inheritors, and that which he earns after involvement with *kufr* is deposited in the *Baytul-Mal* (بيت المال : the Exchequer of an Islamic State). Therefore, should his non-repentance be because he considers *ribā* to be *ḥalal*, he will not be entitled to receive even his principal. And if he does not go to the limit of considering *ribā* as *ḥalal* but, nevertheless, in actual practice, does not stop getting involved with it and, on top of that, gangs up with his kind and stands in confrontation with the Islamic government, he then is a rebel. His belongings too, are confiscated and placed as trust in the *Baytul-Mal*, so that it could be given back to him when he repents. Perhaps, it is to point out to such details that it was said in the form of a condition: فَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ which implies that, if you do not repent, even your principal will be held back.

After that there is the sixth verse (280) which, in comparison to the anti-human claim of *ribā*, has stressed upon pure moral behavior of showing lenience to the poor and the have-nots. It is said that, if your borrower is too poor to pay back your loan, the provision of *Sharī'ah* is that he be given time until he has the means, and should you forgive him your loan, it is much better for you.

The general habit of *ribā*-consumers is that they, once they know that their borrower is poor and cannot pay the loan back at the

appointed time, add up the *ribā* amount in the principal unleashing a vicious series of *ribā* over *ribā*, even increasing the rate of *ribā* in that process.

Here Allah Almighty, the wisest of all law-givers, gave the law that a genuinely poor borrower who is unable to pay back his loan should not be harassed. Instead, he should be given respite until such time that he becomes capable of doing so. Along with it was given the inducement to forgive the loan which is more beneficial for the lender.

The word, *sadaqah* has been used here by the Qur'ān to mean the act of forgiving. The hint given is that this forgiveness will become an act of charity in your case and will bring forth great merit. As for the statement - 'if you forgive, that is better for you' - it can be said that this action was obviously a matter of total loss for them because they were not only being asked to surrender *ribā* but also were going to lose their own principal! Still, the Qur'ān called it 'better' (*khāyr*). There are two reasons for this:

1. This betterment will be witnessed soon after the transitory life of this world when, in lieu of this insignificant earning, one will get the eternal blessings of Paradise.

2. Perhaps there may be yet another hint towards the possibility that one will himself see how good comes out of his deeds. There will be *barakah* (increase, bliss) in what one has. The essence of *barakah* is that a little serves to take care of a lot more needs, even without a quantitative increase in what one has. As such, it is commonly witnessed that there is unlimited *barakah* in the wealth of those who spend in *sadaqah* and *khayrāt*. The little they have serves to take care of so many needs which will never be liquidated with large amounts of money spent by those whose money is *ḥaram* (unlawful).

Then there is the wealth not blessed with *barakah*. One never realizes the purpose for which it is spent. Or, it so happens that such rich people have to spend huge amounts of money on undesirable heads such as medicines, treatment and consultancy fees, which is something the poor do not face. First of all, Allah Almighty blesses them with health which frees them from spending on their treatment and, in case they do fall ill, ordinary treatment gives them their health back. Seen from this angle, forgiving the poor person the loan due to

him, which is apparently a matter of loss, becomes under this Qur'ānic teachings, a beneficial act.

This teaching of giving respite to a poor borrower has also been commended in authentic *aḥādīth* some of which are reproduced below.

According to a *ḥadīth* in the Mu'jim of al-Tabarānī, a person who wishes to be under the shadow of divine mercy when there will be no other shadow for anyone to hide under, he should treat the poor borrower with lenience and deferment, or forgive him the debt, if it comes to that.

Another *ḥadīth* similar to this appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim as well. It is said in a *ḥadīth* from the Musnad of Aḥmad that the person who grants respite to a penniless borrower will get a daily *thawāb* of *sadaqah* in proportion to the amount due against that borrower. And this calculation covers the act of giving respite well before the deadline for repayment arrives; and when the deadline for repayment does arrive and the borrower does not have the means to pay, the respite given at that time will bring forth for the giver of respite a daily *thawāb* of giving twice that amount in *sadaqah*.

Another *ḥadīth* says that a person who wishes that his prayer be answered, or his misfortune be removed, he should give respite to the penniless in debt.

In the last verse (281), there appear again the subjects of the fear of the Last Day, its accounting, its rewards and punishment, at which end these verses containing the injunctions of *ribā*. It was said in this last verse:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ O

> That is, fear a day on which all of you will be assembled before Allah when everyone will be fully and equitably recompensed for his deeds and they will not be wronged.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه says that this verse is the last in the order of its revelation. No other verse was revealed after that. Thirty-one days later, the Holy Prophet ﷺ left this mortal world. There are other reports which say that this happened after only nine days.

Upto this point, the explanations have been restricted to the verses

of Sūrah al-Baqarah which concern the injunctions of *ribā*. Dealing with the unlawfulness and prohibition of *ribā*, there are in the noble Qur'ān seven verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah cited above, one verse in Sūrah Al-'Imrān and two verses in Sūrah al-Nisā'. There is yet another verse in Sūrah al-Rūm the explanations of which differ. Some have taken it too in the sense of usury or interest, while others hold that it has some other connotation. Thus there are ten verses of the Holy Qur'ān which carry the injunctions of *ribā* or interest.

Before we get to know the whole truth about *ribā*, it seems appropriate that the translation and explanation of the rest of the verses which appear in the Sūrahs Al-'Imrān, al-Nisā' and al-Rūm, should be given here so that it becomes easy for us to understand the true nature of *ribā* in the combined perspective of all these verses.

Verse 130, of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān (3) reads as follows:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوا الرِّبٰوٓا اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً ۖ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝

O those who believe, do not eat *Ribā* (usury or interest) multiplied many times. And fear Allah, so that you may be successful.

There is a special event behind the revelation of this verse. In pre-Islam Arabia, the general pattern of *ribā* transactions was that loans were given on *ribā* for a set period of time; when that period expired and the borrower was unable to pay it back, he was given an extension of time on the condition that the amount of *ribā* was to be increased. Similarly, if payment was not made even on the expiry of the second deadline, the amount of *ribā* was further increased. This fact is mentioned in general books of *Tafsīr*, specially in *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, on the authority of *Mujāhid*.

The verse was revealed to eradicate this inhuman custom of pre-Islam Arabia. Therefore, by saying اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً (*aḍ'āfam'Muḍā'afatan*: multiplied many times) in the verse, their prevailing practice was condemned and they were warned on their selfishness and anti-community conduct, and naturally so, it was declared prohibited. This does not mean that *ribā* will not be prohibited if it happens not to be multiplied many times, because the absolute prohibition of *ribā* has

been very clearly stated in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-Nisā', irrespective of its being doubled or multiplied many times. This is like it has been said at several places in the Holy Qur'ān: لَاتَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِیْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا (Do not take a paltry price in exchange of My verses). The expression 'paltry price' was used here to indicate that even if the kingdom of the whole world was taken in exchange for the Divinely revealed verses, the price will still be 'paltry.' It does not mean that taking a paltry price against the verses of the Qur'ān is *ḥaram*, but taking a higher price would be permissible. Similarly, the expression أَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً (multiplied many times), has been introduced only to focus attention on their shameful method and it is not a necessary condition for the prohibition.

Moreover, if we think about the prevalent methods of *ribā*, we will reach the conclusion that once the habit of taking *ribā* is settled, the *ribā* does not remain simple *ribā* anymore; it necessarily becomes doubled and multiplied because the amount accrued from *ribā* becomes a part of the total amount owned by the creditor and, when he further circulates this additional amount of *ribā* on interest or usury, the *ribā* becomes multiplied. Should this chain action go on building up, nothing can stop it from becoming أَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً (multiplied many times). This way every *ribā* will end up increasing several times.

Having dealt with verse 130 of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān, let us now look at the two verses, 160 and 161 of Sūrah al-Nisā' which concern *ribā*. These are as follows:

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ۙ وَّأَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبٰوا وَقَدْ نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيْمًا ۝

So, for the transgression of those who became Jews, We prohibited for them the good things earlier made lawful for them and for their preventing (people) frequently from the way of Allah, and for their taking *ribā* (usury or interest) while they were forbidden from it, and for their eating up the properties of the people by false means. And We have prepared, for the disbelievers among them, a painful punishment.

These two verses tell us that *ribā* was equally prohibited under the law of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام . When the Jews opposed it, they were

appropriately punished in their worldly life when they started devouring the unlawful just out of greed for the mortal gains of the world, consequently then, Allah Almighty declared some lawful things prohibited for them.

Verse 39 of Section 4 in Sūrah al-Rūm is as follows:

وَمَا اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ رِّبًا لِّيَرْبُوَا۟ فِيْۤ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوْا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ زَكٰوةٍ تُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُوْنَ ۝

> And what you give in usury, that it may increase upon the people's wealth, increases not with God; but what you give in alms, desiring God's Face, - they shall receive recompense manifold. (30:39)

Some commentators have taken this verse, like others mentioned earlier, to be dealing with interest or usury in view of the use of the word *ribā* meaning 'increase' in the text. According to them, the verse means that money does seem to increase apparently by taking interest, but in fact, it does not. It is like the case of a person whose body gets swollen. Obviously this 'increases' his body but no sane person would be happy with this sort of 'increase'. On the contrary, he would regard it as death in the offing. As compared to this, the giving of *zakāh* and *sadaqah* does seem to decrease the wealth apparently, but that is no decrease in fact, rather on the contrary, it is the source of thousands of increases. It is like someone who takes purgative as system-cleanser or lets blood as a therapeutic measure; he looks weak on the outside and seems to miss something in his body but those who know regard this 'decrease' to be a fore-runner of his 'increase' in health and strength.

According to some scholars of *tafsīr*, this verse does not refer to the prohibition of usury or interest at all, rather, the word '*ribā*' used in that verse refers to a gift presented to someone, not in good faith, but with the intention that it would bring back some better gift in return from the receiver. The gifts of this type are in vogue in some communities at the time of marital ceremonies Since this type of giving is to seek selfish ends and not to seek the pleasure of Allah Almighty, therefore, it was said in the verse that by doing so your wealth may seem to increase, but actually it does not increase with

Allah, while that which is given as *zakah* and *sadaqat* to seek the pleasure of Allah Almighty goes on to double and redouble with Allah.

According to this explanation, the sense of the verse will match with what was said addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ in another verse (74:6): وَلَا تَمْنُنْ تَسْتَكْثِرُ that is, do not do favour to anyone with the intention that it may bring to you some added benefit in return.

This second explanation appears to be obviously weightier in connection with this verse of Surah al-Rum. Firstly, because Surah al-Rum is Makki. Although, it is not necessary that every verse in a Makki Surah is revealed in Makkah, yet there exists strong probability that it is so unless proved otherwise. And in case the verse is Makki, it cannot be interpreted to carry the sense of the prohibition of *riba* because the prohibition of *riba* came by revelation in Madinah. In addition to this, the subject dealt with earlier than this verse also indicates a tilt towards this explanation. There it was said: فَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ which means: 'Give to the relative his due, and to the poor and the wayfarer. This is better for those who seek the pleasure of Allah.'

In this verse, it has been stated that spending on relatives, the poor and the wayfarers can become an act of *thawāb* only on the condition that the intention behind it should be that of seeking the pleasure of Allah Almighty. Then, following that, in the verse under discussion, it was further explained that financial help given to someone with the hope that it will bring back greater return from the receiver of the help is certainly no spending in the way of Allah where the purpose is hardly to seek His pleasure. As a result, this will bring no *thawāb*.

Anyhow, there are, beside this particular verse, several other verses cited earlier which do deal with the prohibition of *ribā*. Out of these, there is the verse from Surah Al-'Imran which prohibits doubled and multiplied *ribā*; the rest of the verses state the prohibition of *ribā* as such. These details, at the least, clear this much that *ribā* is *haram* (unlawful) anyway, be it doubled and multiplied, simple or compound. It may be kept in mind that the degree of its being *ḥaram* is so severe that a declaration of war has been made on behalf of Allah and His Messenger against those who challenge the injunction.

Some additional details about *Ribā*

Since *ribā* has become the supporting pillar of the prevailing trading system today, it is commonly noticed that people are usually disposed to balk at the idea of its unlawfulness when confronted with its prohibition under the verses of the Book of Allah and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Rather than understand and explain its real nature, they tend to diffuse the issue with excuses. I wish to state humbly that the issue has to be first analysed and discussed sanely by taking up each aspect in its proper setting, without which we are sure to end up confusing issues. There are three parts of this discussion:

1. What is the real nature of *ribā* in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and what forms it does it cover?
2. What is the wisdom behind the prohibition of this *ribā*?
3. Granted that *ribā*, no matter how evil it may be, has become a pillar of the economic system all over the contemporary world. Now if we were to abandon it, under injunctions of the Qur'ān, how will the system of banking and trade run?

To begin with, the word, ربا (*Ribā*) is a well-known word in the Arabic language. This word was known, not only since the blessed appearance of the noble Prophet ﷺ , but also during the time when Arabia was pagan and the Qur'ān was not yet revealed. Moreover, the verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' also tell us that the word *ribā* and its related dealings were equally well-known during the times of the Torah, where too, it was declared *ḥaram* (unlawful).

It is obvious that *ribā* was known since ages in Arabia and its environs. Continuous transactions were being made as an established custom. When the Qur'ān was revealed, it not only prohibited *ribā* but also gave the information that *riba* was made unlawful for the community of Mūsā علیہ السلام as well. How then, can the nature of this word become something so ambiguous that it starts presenting difficulties in understanding and explaining its meaning and applications?

This is the reason why, in the year of Hijrah 8, when the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah relating to the unlawfulness of *ribā* were revealed, there appears no report from the noble Companions anywhere which

may indicate that they had to face any doubt in understanding the real nature of *ribā*, and that they had to go as far as to verify it with the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, something they did in other matters. On the contrary, just as they immediately acted upon the injunction prohibiting liquor the moment it was revealed, very similarly, they abandoned all *ribā* transactions the moment the injunction prohibiting *ribā* was revealed. The Muslims just cancelled all *ribā* amounts that non-Muslims owed to them on all their deals made before the prohibition. Then, the case of Muslims who did not wish to give *ribā* amounts they owed was brought to the court of the *Amīr* of Makkah. He inquired the Holy Prophet ﷺ . The deciding injunction was revealed by Allah Almighty through the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah which declared that it was also not permissible now to give or take *ribā* amounts that belonged to the previous times.

Here the non-Muslims might have found the ground to question as to why should they suffer loss of money because of an injunction of Islamic law? Therefore, in order to offset that possibility, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made it clear in his Address of the Last Hajj that this injunction of Islamic law affects, not only the non-Muslims, but also the Muslims in an equal degree. And the very first amount of *ribā* that was written off was the enormous amount which belonged to Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی الله عنه , the respected uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

In short, when *ribā* was prohibited, its meaning was no secret. It was a known practice. It was the same *ribā* as the Arabs used to give and take it and called it as such. The Qur'ān made it *ḥaram*, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ enforced the ruling, not in the form of some moral teaching, but as the law of the land. However, he did include certain forms of transactions under *ribā* which were not generally held to be *ribā*. It was the determining of these very forms that posed difficulties for Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه , and here it was that the leading jurists of Islam differed; otherwise, the real *ribā*, which the Arabs knew by that very name, was never doubted or questioned by anybody as there was no reason to do so.

Now let us find out what *ribā* the Arabs were used to. The renowned commentator, Ibn Jarīr has reported from Sayyidnā Mujāhid that the *ribā* practised in pagan Arabia which was prohibited

by the Qur'ān consisted of giving loan for a fixed period and then taking a fixed increase over and above the principal. If the loan was not paid back on the fixed date, an extension of time was granted on condition that the *ribā* was to be further increased. The same information has been reported from Sayyidnā Qatādah رضی اللہ عنہ and from other leading commentators. (Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr, page 62, volume 3)

Abū Hayyān al-Gharnāṭī, the famous commentator from Andulusia (Spain) has, in his commentary - al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, reported the same form of *ribā* prevailing in pagan Arabia, that is, they advanced a loan, took their 'profit' on it, and if the time for repayment was to be extended beyond the first due date, they increased the amount of interest in that proportion. This was called *ribā*. These were the people of the same pagan Arabia who said that taking 'profit' when they give their money on loan should also be permissible similar to buying and selling where taking 'profit' is permissible. The Holy Qur'ān declared this to be *ḥaram* and made it clear that the injunctions governing buying and selling were different.

The same subject has been authentically narrated in all reliable books of *Tafsīr*, such as, Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr and Rūh al-Ma'ānī etc.

Ibn al-'Arabi has said in Ahkam al-Qur'ān:

الربو فی اللغة الرباوة والمرادبه فی الاية کل زیادة لایقابلها عوض (ج ٢ ص ١٠١)

> Lexically, *ribā* means increase, and in the verse, it means the increase against which there is nothing in exchange but a loan and its time.

Imām al-Rāzī has said in his *Tafsīr* that *ribā* takes two forms. It could be *ribā* in trading transactions, and in loans. This second form was what commonly prevailed in *Jāhiliyyah* or pagan Arabia. The known practice was that they would give their money on loan to someone for a fixed period of time and receive 'profit' against it every month. If the borrower failed to pay back at the appointed time, the time-limit was extended on condition that the amount of *ribā* was to be further increased. This was the *ribā* of the Age of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*) which was declared *ḥaram* (unlawful) by the Holy Qur'ān.

In Ahkām al-Qur'ān, Imām al-Jassās defines *ribā* as follows:

هوالقرض المشروط فيه الأجل وزيادة مال على المستقرض

The loan given for a certain time on condition that the borrower will pay an increased amount above the principal.

In *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has defined *ribā* by saying:

كل قرض جرنفعا فهوربا

The loan that draws profit is *ribā*.

This *ḥadīth* appears in al-Jāmi' al-Saghīr and al-Azizī calls it *ḥasan*.

To sum up, the giving of loan and then taking 'profit' on it is *riba*, which was widely known and practised during the *Jāhiliyyah* in Arabia, which was clearly declared *haram* by the subject verse of the Holy Qur'ān, and which was abandoned by the noble Companions the moment these verses were revealed, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ enforced its prohibition through his judgments in the legal suits. As there was no ambiguity in its connotation, nobody faced any doubt or difficulty in understanding the term.

However, the Holy Prophet ﷺ did include some forms of buying and selling within the range of *ribā* which the Arabs did not take as *ribā*. For instance, in the buying and selling of six commodities on barter basis, he ruled that they be exchanged like for like, equal for equal, and hand-to-hand. Any deviation in measure, more or less, and any credit-oriented transaction with regard to these commodities will also fall within the purview of *ribā*. These six commodities are gold, silver, wheat, barley, dates and grapes.

Under the same principle, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after the revelation of the verses of *ribā*, ruled that some forms of transactions in vogue known as *al-muzābanah*[57] and *al-muhāqalah*[58] come under *ribā*, and therefore, declared them to be *haram*. (Ibn Kathīr with reference to Mustadrak Ḥakim, page 327, Volume 1).

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57. *Al-muzābanah* (المزابنة) is the sale of fruit upon its tree by taking fruit already plucked on the basis of conjecture.

58. *Al-muhāqalah* (المحاقلة) is the sale of grains, such as wheat, chick-peas etc, still in the ears of their standing crop by taking dried and husked wheat or chick-peas on the basis of conjecture. Since conjecture has the possibility of things turning out less or more, it was prohibited.

Here the question worth consideration was: Are these six commodities particular as such, or there are other commodities also which fall under the same injunction? If there are some, what shall be the the basis for including other commodities under the same rule? What forms shall be taken to have come under *riba*? This was the difficulty faced by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه because of which he said:

إن آية الربوا من آخرما نزل من القرآن وإن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قبض قبل أن يبينه لنا فدعوا الربوا والريبة

The verse of *riba* is among the last verses of the Qur'ān. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was taken away before he could make its details clear for us. So give up not only *riba* but also all the doubtful transactions. (Ahkām al-Qur'ān, Jassās, page 551 and Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, with reference to Ibn Majah, page 328, volume 1).

Here Sayyidnā 'Umar, رضی الله عنه is talking about the particular forms of buying and selling transactions, and their details, which were not taken as *riba* in *Jāhiliyyah*. Bringing these under the category of *riba*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made them *ḥaram*. As regards the main *riba*, which was commonly known in Arabia and which was abandoned by the noble Companions and was enforced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ announcing its prohibition publicly during his Address of the Last Hajj, it was not possible at all that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه would have faced any difficulty or doubt in understanding it. Moreover, when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله تعالی عنه did face doubt in certain forms of *riba*, he resolved the problem by proposing that the forms where there is the least doubt of *riba* should also be abandoned.

But it is surprising that some of those who are slavishly impressed by the veneer of glamour, wealth and the interest-based trading system of today, have deduced from this saying of Sayyidnā 'Umar that the sense of *riba* had thus been left abstract and that there is room for personal opinion here, the error of which has already been proved by a lot of material before us. In Ahkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī has strongly refuted those who had used the words of Sayyidnā 'Umar to classify the verses of *riba* as abstract.He says:

ان من زعم ان هذه الاية مجملة فلم يفهم مقاطع الشريعة فان الله تعالى ارسل رسوله الى قوم هو منهم بلغتهم وانزل عليه كتابه تيسيرا منه بلسانه

ولسانهم والربا فى اللغة الرباوة والمرادبه فى الاية كل زيادة لايقابلها عوض

> He who claimed that this verse is abstract did not understand the clear and confident affirmation of the Sharī'ah because Allah Almighty sent His messenger to a people of whom he was one, sent him (speaking) in their language, revealed His Book to him so that they comprehend it easily in their language, and in their language the word *ribā* means 'increase'; and in the verse, it means the increase that has no financial consideration against it, (but simply time).

Imām al-Rāzī has said in his commentary that *ribā* is of two kinds - the *ribā* on loans and the *ribā* of taking more on barter. The first kind was well-known in *Jāhiliyyah* and people during those days used to transact it freely. The second kind is what comes through the *ḥadīth* which rules that increase or decrease in the barter of certain commodities is also included under *ribā*.

It appears in Ahkām al-Qur'ān of al-Jassās that *ribā* is of two kinds - the *ribā* in buying and selling and the *ribā* without buying and selling. The *ribā* of *Jāhiliyyah* belonged to this very second kind. By definition it means the loan on which 'profit' is taken on the basis of time duration. Ibn Rushd has, in Bidayah al-Mujtāhid, taken the same view, and has further proved the unlawfulness of the *ribā* of taking 'profit' on loans, on the authority of the Qur'ān, the *Sunnah* and the consensus of the Muslim community.

In Sharh Ma'ānī al-Athar, Imām al-Tahawī has taken up this subject in great detail. He has said that the *ribā* mentioned in the Qur'ān is, openly and clearly, the *riba* that was given and taken on loans, and it was known as *ribā* in *Jāhiliyyah*. After that, it was through the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and his *Sunnah*, that the other kind of *ribā* became known, and which was identified with increasing, decreasing or non-cash dealing in particular types of buying and selling activity. That this *ribā* is also *haram* stands proved by repeated *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . However, in the absence of fully clear details governing this kind of *ribā* some Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ faced difficulty and jurists differed. (op cit., page 232, vol. 2)

Shāh Waliullāh has said in *Hujjatullāh al-balighah* that these are two separate things. One is the *ribā* in real terms, and the other is that which is included in the prohibition of *ribā*. The *ribā* in real terms means something additional claimed over the principal in a transaction of loan. But the *ḥadīth* has included in the prohibition a transaction of bartering certain commodities whereby an additional measure is claimed in exchange of the same commodity. When it appears in the *ḥadīth* of Sahih al-Bukhari that لاربا إلا فى النسيئة : "There is no *riba* except in *nasi'ah* {loan}", it simply means that the real and primary *ribā*, the one that is commonly understood and termed as *ribā*, is nothing but taking 'profit' on loans. Excepting this, all other kinds have been annexed with it by extending prohibition to all of them.

Summing up the discussion

1. *Ribā* was already a known transaction before the revelation of the Qur'an. The taking of increase on loans given for a certain time was called *ribā*.

2. The noble Companions, all of them, abandoned this *ribā* the moment its unlawfulness was revealed in the Qur'ān. None of them had any difficulty or doubt in comprehending or explaining its meaning.

3. In the barter transactions of six commodities it was declared by the Holy Prophet ﷺ that whenever any one of these is bartered with a similar commodity, both of them must be equal in weight or measure. Any increase or decrease in such transactions has been declared as included in the prohibition of *ribā*. This much was expressly told by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But the question was whether this special type of prohibition is restricted to these six commodities alone or it extends to some other commodities also, and if it extends to some other commodities, on what basis one can identify those commodities. This question needed a deeper insight into the juristic issues involved, and the Muslim jurists came out with different suggestions to answer this question. It was this very question that agitated the mind of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه . Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ had not stated these rules himself and because doubt lurked therein, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه regretfully wished how good it would have been if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had set the relevant rules himself which would have given

them peace of mind in doubtful situations. Then he said that not only *ribā*, but also the very doubt of *ribā*, wherever it may be, should be avoided.

4. It is certain that the real and primary *ribā*, which the Muslim jurists have called "*ribā al-Qur'ān*" (the *ribā* of Qur'ān) or "*ribā al-Qard*" (the *riba* of loan), is exactly what was known and practised in Arabia, that is, claiming 'profit' on loan against the time allowed for repayment. Other kinds of *ribā* identified in *hadīth* are all annexed to this very *ribā* and come under the injunction governing it. As regards the difference of opinion that rose in the community was exclusively related to this second type of *ribā* deals. The first kind of *ribā* is called '*ribā al-Qard*' or "the *ribā* of Qur'ān"; that it is categorically *ḥaram* (forbidden) has never been disputed in the Muslim community.

In short, the *ribā* of today which is supposed to be the pivot of human economy and features in discussions on the problem of interest, is nothing but this *ribā*, the unlawfulness of which stands proved on the authority of the seven verses of the Qur'ān, of more than forty *aḥādīth* and of the consensus of the Muslim community.

The second kind of *ribā* which occurs in buying and selling is neither common in practice, nor requires any discussion here.

Upto this point, effort was made to clarify the meaning of *ribā* as contemplated in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, which is the first step towards understanding the problem of interest.

The Wisdom behind the Prohibition of *Ribā*

Now comes the second part of the discussion which relates to the wisdom behind the prohibition of *ribā* and to the spiritual and economic harms of *ribā* transactions because of which Islam has declared it to be such a major sin.

First of all, we should realize that there is nothing in the entire creation of the world which has no goodness or utility at all. Even in serpents, scorpions, wolves, lions, and in arsenic, that fatal poison, there are thousands of utilities for human beings. Is there anything in this vastness of nature which could really be called bad? Take theft, robbery, villainy, bribery - not one of these remains without this or that benefit. But, it is commonly recognized in every religion and

community, in every school of thought, that things which have more benefits and less harms are called beneficial and useful. Conversely, things that cause more harm and less benefit are taken to be harmful and useless. Even the noble Qur'an, while declaring liquor and gambling to be *ḥaram*, proclaimed that they do hold some benefits for people, but the curse of sins they generate is far greater than the benefits they yield. Therefore, these cannot be called good or useful; on the contrary, taking these to be acutely harmful and destructive, it is necessary that they be avoided.

The case of *ribā* is not different. Here the consumer of *ribā* does have some temporal benefit apparently coming to him, but its curse in this world and in the Hereafter is much too severe as compared to this benefit.

An intelligent person who compares things in terms of their profit and loss, harm and benefit can hardly include things of casual benefit with an everlasting loss in the list of useful things. Similarly, no sane and just person will say that personal and individual gain, which causes loss to the whole community or group, is useful. In theft, and in robbery, the gain of the gangster and the take of the thief is all too obvious, but it is certainly harmful for the entire community since it ruins its peace and sense of security. That is why no human being calls theft and robbery good.

After these introductory remarks, let us look at the problem of *ribā*. A little deliberation will show that its spiritual and moral loss as compared to the casual or transitory profit earned by the *ribā*-consumer is so severe that it virtually takes away the great quality of being 'human' from him. Again, it should be borne in mind that the transitory gain that comes to him is restricted to his person only. As compared to this, the entire community, victimized by economic crisis, suffers great loss. But, strange are the affairs of the world. When something becomes the craze of the time, its drawbacks go out of sight. One looks for nothing but gains - no matter how small, mean and casual be those gains. Nobody cares to look at the harm lying under them - no matter how fatal and universal it may be.

Custom and practice act like chloroform on human temperaments. They make them insensitive. There are very few individuals who

would investigate into prevailing customs and practices and then try to understand how beneficial or harmful they are. Bad coming to worse, even if such harms are identified and people are openly warned of the dangers, the conformity to prevailing custom and practice is such that the right course is just not taken.

Ribā has become an epidemic in modern times holding the entire world squeezed in its clutches. In fact, it has so reversed the very taste of human nature that the bitter has started tasting sweet. That which is the cause of economic ruin for the entire humanity is being dished out as the solution of economic ills. The situation is such that a thinker who raises his voice in protest is brushed aside as crazy.

All this is what it is. But a physician of humanity must remain the physician he is. Should he, after having closely observed that epidemic has spread in an area and treatment has become ineffective, start thinking of telling people that there is just no disease around and everything is fine, he then becomes a killer of humanity robbing it of its potential. It is the duty of a really expert physician of human affairs, even at a time such as this, that he should continue telling people about the disease and its harmful effects and keep suggesting ways it could be cured.

The prophets عليهم السلام come to reform human society. Whether or not they will be heard is something they never worry about. If they had waited for people to hear and obey them, *kufr* and *shirk* would have certainly filled the whole world. Incidentally, who believed in the *kalimāh* لا إله إلا الله : "There is no God but Allah" when the Last of the Prophets ﷺ was ordained by Allah for its preaching and teaching?

Although *ribā* is taken to be the backbone of contemporary economy, but the truth of the matter is, what some Western thinkers have themselves admitted, that it is no backbone of economics, rather on the contrary, it is a worm grown in and feeding on it.

But it is regrettable that even theoreticians and scientists of today are unable to free themselves from the stranglehold of custom and practice and do some serious thinking in this direction. How is it that even the experience of hundreds of years fails to attract their attention towards the ultimate outcome of *ribā* or interest, which is nothing

except that peoples and communities around the world suffer from want and hunger, become victims of many an economic crisis and the poor grow poorer. As compared to their fate, some capitalists take advantage of the wealth of the whole community, become its leeches sucking blood from the body of the community and helping themselves to grow and prosper. The gall of these intellectuals is indeed surprising. When this reality is presented before them, they would like to refute us by taking us to the market places of U.S.A. and E.E.C. so that we could observe the blessings of interest. They like us to be impressed by the prosperity they have acquired through it. In fact, this is like taking us to show the blessings of acts committed by some nation of man-eaters and telling us how chubby and flushed with 'health' they are in their residences and work-places. Then to top that assertion, effort is made to prove on this basis, that this act of theirs is the best of acts.

However, in answer to that, any sane and just person would simply suggest that the 'blessings' of the act of man-eaters cannot be observed in the habitat of the man-eaters. One has to go to other habitats where lie dead bodies in thousands and thousands on whose blood and flesh these beasts have grown. Islam and the Shari'ah of Islam can never accept such an act as correct and useful, as a result of which, the humanity in general and the Muslim community in particular becomes a target of destruction while some individuals, or their groups, go on prospering.

Economic Drawbacks of *Ribā* or Interest

If there was no other defect in *ribā* except that it results in the gain of some individuals and the loss of the whole humanity, that one and very defect would have been enough to justify its prohibition and hate-worthiness, although, it does have many other economic drawbacks and spiritual disasters.

First of all, let us understand how *ribā* is the gain of particular individuals and the loss of a community in general. The hackneyed method of *ribā* practised by usurers was so crude that even a person of ordinary commonsense could see how it benefitted a particular person and harmed the community in general. But 'the new enlightenment' of today, or shall we call it 'the new darkness', by producing 'purified'

liquor through mechanical processing and aging, by inventing new and fancy forms for theft and robbery, and by innovating novel covers for evil and immodesty, has made everybody so 'civilized' that watchers of the surface are unable to see the evil hidden behind. Very similar to this, in order to continue the practice of *ribā* or interest, individual money-lending counters have been replaced by joint stock companies called banks. Now, to throw dust in everybody's eyes, consumers are 'educated' that this modern method of *ribā* is good for the whole community because common people do not know how to run a business with their money, or cannot do so due to shortage of capital, so money they all have goes as deposit in banks and everyone of them manages to get, no matter how little, some profit in the name of interest. In addition to that, big businessmen are given the opportunity to borrow money on interest from banks, invest in big business and reap the benefits. Thus interest has been made to appear as some sort of 'blessing' which is reaching all individuals of the community!

However, a little honesty will show that this is a grand deception which, by transforming dirty distilleries into posh hotels and hooker-dens into cinemas and night clubs, has been released to present poison as antidote, and the harmful as beneficial. Intelligent people have no problem in seeing through the deceptive covering placed on anti-moral crimes. They know it has inevitably increased crimes, spreading its poison more acutely than ever before. Similar is the case of *ribā*, the new form of which, by making the masses have a sip of an insignificant percentage of interest, has made them accomplices in their crime; while at the same time, they opened for themselves limitless opportunities to keep committing this crime.

Who does not know that this insignificant percentage of interest doled out by 'saving' banks and post offices to clients cannot, by any means, take care of their living expenses. They are, therefore, forced to go for manual labour or seek a job. Business is something they hardly think of themselves, and if somebody does play with the idea for a while, the problem is that the capital of the entire community sits in the banks and the shape of things in business is such that a person with a small capital can hardly make an entry there unless he wishes to commit suicide. The reason is that banks can advance a major loan

only to one who has sound credit and large business. One who has a million can get a loan of ten millions. He can run a business valued ten times more than his personal capital would allow. In contrast, the man with a small capital has little or no credit rating; the banks do not trust him enough to advance a loan ten times more than his worth. One who owns a thousand can hardly get an even thousand, let alone ten thousand. Take the case of a person who owns a hundred thousand and runs a business worth a million by using nine hundred thousand of bank money. Suppose he earns a profit of one per cent which means he has earned a ten per cent profit on his hundred thousand. In comparison, a person who uses his personal hundred thousand in business, will earn a profit of no more than one per cent on his hundred thousand, which would be hardly enough to cover even his operating expenses. Then there is yet another factor; the man with a large capital can buy raw material from the market at a price so low and discounted which the small capitalist cannot get. As a result, the man with a small capital is rendered helpless and needy. Should he, secretly pursued by his misfortune, put his foot into some such business already monopolized by big capitalists, they will then, taking him to be an unwelcome partner in their godhood, make the market collapse, even if it be at their cost, making the small capitalist lose all his capital and profit. This is why business gets monoplized by some individuals who happen to be big capitalists.

Let us consider some other injuries caused by this interest-oriented economic system:

1. First comes the great injustice inflicted on the community when a whole set of people are deprived of the opportunity to engage in real business, and are reduced to economic slavery of big capitalists, who elect to give them a 'profit' of their choice as some tip.

2. Another loss that affects the whole country comes through the monopolization of market rates of commodities made possible by this system. They sell high and fill their coffers by emptying the pockets of the whole community. Worse still, they have the evil choice of stopping the sale of their holdings in order to further increase prices by design. If these selfish people were not allowed to feed on the combined capital of the community through the agency of banks, and if they were left

with no other alternative but to run their business with their personal capital, things would be different. The small capitalist would have been saved from distress and these self-serving people would not be sitting as demi-gods on all trading options. The investors with a small capital, by showing profits in business ventures, would have given impetus to others. More and more businesses would come up managed by separate staffers giving livelihood to thousands of needy individuals besides making business profits fairly widespread, and of course, the general availability of merchandise in the market would be favourably affected. The reason is competition which motivates a businessman to reduce his margin of profit.

In short, this Machiavellian method has infected nations and communities with a fatal disease, apart from the brain-washing it has done which makes the patient take disease as the cure.

3. Now let us look at the third economic disaster engineered through bank interests. Here is a person with a capital of ten thousand and he goes in business worth a hundred thousand, the additional capital advanced by a bank as interest-bearing loan. If by chance, he is hit by loss, his capital sinks and he goes insolvent then the outcome is interesting. Just imagine that he bears only ten per cent of the loss, while the rest of the loss, that is ninety per cent, is absorbed by the whole community, whose money he had borrowed from the bank to invest in his business. Even if the bank writes off the loss as an interim measure, it is clear that the bank is the pocket of a nation, and the loss will ultimately hit the nation. The outcome is that the borrowing capitalist was the sole owner of the profit as far as the profit kept coming, leaving nothing or very little for the community. When came the loss, it was passed on to the whole community.

4. Yet another economic drawback of *ribā* lies in the predicament of the borrower on interest when he is hit by a major loss. Once this happens he is unable to survive anymore. To begin with, he never had enough capital the loss of which he could cushion. The loss throws him into a double distress. Not only does he lose his profit and capital but also, at the same time, gets buried under the bank loan for the liquidation of which he has no means. As compared to this, should he lose his entire capital in an interest-free business, he would, at the most become penniless but, burdened with debt he definitely will not be.

In 1954, the cotton business of Pakistan suffered, to use a word of the Qur'ān, with the calamity of *muhāq* (محاق : destruction by loss). The Government rescued the businessmen at the cost of millions of rupees but nobody bothered to realize that all this was a curse of *ribā* or interest, for the simple reason that cotton dealers had invested mostly bank-borrowed capital in this business. Their own capital was insignificant. As Divine decree would have it, the cotton market fell so sharply that its price zoomed down from rupees one hundred and twenty-five to just ten rupees. The cotton traders were rendered incapable of returning money to cover bank margins. Left with no choice, the market was closed down and an SOS was sent to the Government. The Government stepped in and bought off the stocks, not at rupees ten, but at the raised price of ninety rupees. Thus it took upon itself the loss of millions and saved these traders from going insolvent. Whose money did the Government have? Naturally, it belonged to the same helpless poor nation, the Muslim *ummah*!

In short, the naked result of banking business is that some individuals reap benefits out of the capital of the entire community and the loss, when it comes, is made to fall on the whole nation.

The design for deception

You have already seen how *ribā* and interest prey on communities and nations and how some individuals are promoted instead. Along with it, you would do well to discover yet another demonstration of evil genius. When the consumers of *ribā* realized, out of their own experience as well, what the Qur'ān has said: يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا - that is, earnings of interest have to suffer from the calamity of *muḥāq*, from loss and destruction, as a result of which one has to go insolvent - they established two permanent institutions: The Insurance and the Stock Exchange. They saw that losses in business occur for two reasons. One of these takes the form of natural calamity like the drowning or burning of a ship or some such mishap of some other nature. The other could be that market rates of stock in hand go lower than its purchase price. The capital invested in both these situations is the jointly owned capital of the community, not that of the individual capitalist, therefore, the loss of the community is higher, and that of the individual capitalist, minimal. But they did not stop at that. In order

to shift even this minimal loss factor on to the shoulders of the community, they floated insurance companies which hold the capital of the community, just as banks do. When some natural calamity inflicts losses on these consumers of *ribā*, they use the medium of insurance to shift, not just partial, but the entire loss to the jointly held capital of the community.

People think that insurance companies are God's mercy as they rescue the sinking. But should they observe and think honestly, they would start seeing the same deception here too. Isn't it that their capital was formed by contributions from the community enticed by the promise of help in the event of unforeseen accidents. The truth is that the advantage of receiving large sums of money is derived by capitalists of higher rating, who would, on occasions, burn or bang their own car or get it stolen in order to buy a new one out of the insurance claim. At the probability rate of one or two percent there would be a couple of lucky fellows who might get some money because of accidental death.

Then there is the second kind of institution, the stock exchange which served as a defensive shield against price slumps. This speculative contraption was used to spread out the ill-effects of deals over every individual of the community, transferring thereby the loss coming to them onto the community once again.

This brief account, it is hoped, may have given you at least the idea that bank interest and the business it helps to flourish is the cause of want, hunger and economic incapacity of the entire humanity. Of course, some wealthy individuals have their wealth further increased through this method which results in the unmaking of the community and the making of some individuals who hold the key to the accumulated capital of the country or nation in their hands. Generally governments did notice this enormously disturbing phenomena but the cure they came up with was to increase the income tax rate for big capitalists, so much so that the maximum rate was set almost close to hundred per cent, which was all designed to funnel capital from them back into the national treasury.

But, as a result of such laws and as everyone knows, factories and businesses started maintaining fictional or doctored accounts. In order

to hide a lot of capital from the Government, money once again started going into private treasuries.

To sum up, it is universally clear that concentration of wealth in the captivating hands of few individuals of a nation is highly injurious to the economic health of the country. This is why income tax rates are pushed so high, but experience bears out that this was no cure to the disease. Maybe the reason is that the disease was not correctly diagnosed, and the real cause remained undiscovered. This sort of treatment reminds one of the Persian line saying: 'you closed the door for safety without finding out that the enemy was sitting inside the house'.

The reason why wealth concentrates in the hands of big capitalists is nothing but interest-oriented business and the unjust profiteering from national wealth by particular individuals. Unless we put an end to this in accordance with the teachings of Islam and unless we promote the practice that everyone goes in business with 'his' capital only, this disease cannot be cured.

A doubt and its answer

The question arises here when public money is deposited in banks some benefit does trickle on to people, no matter how little it may be. Maybe, the big capitalists did manage to extract more benefits out of it. But what would happen if this system of depositing money in the banks was not there? The whole thing will end up being what it was in old days when money used to stay in underground chests, which was of no immediate use to the owner, or to anybody else.

The answer to this is that Islam has, on one hand, by declaring interest or *ribā* to be *ḥaram* (unlawful), closed the door on the concentration of national wealth in the hands of a known few capitalists, while at the same time, it has, by imposing the obligation of the levy of *zakāh*, compelled every owner of the above-threshold capital not to keep his capital frozen but invest it in business. Should a person hoard up his money or gold, and since *zakāh* is a recurring obligation to pay, he will still be giving out the fortieth part of his holdings as *zakāh* every year, as a result of which whatever he has will not be there anymore. Therefore, every sane person will have to put his capital in some useful enterprise, enjoy its benefits and allow others to share it with him

and then, from the profit that he makes, he pays his *zakāh* 'properly' as required.

The obligation of *zakāh* ensures progress in business

We know that paying *zakāh* properly has a great utility of its own. It aims to help the poor and the needy in the community. Similarly, this obligation is a wonderful method of persuading people to go in business, so that the economic status of Muslims is upgraded. It is clear when everybody realizes that frozen capital gets no profit, on the contrary, the fortieth part is invariably chiselled away at the end of each year, he will have to think of investing his money in some business. But his business will not follow the model of one man running a business on the strength of capital supplied by millions of people. That model works on interest. Since marketing money is *haram*, every wealthy person will seek to go in business on his own. And when it so happens that big capitalists are left with no choice but to engage in business supported by their personal capital, those with a small capital will not face the sort of difficulties in business take-offs that confronted them in the event they sought bank loans on interest to run a larger business. Thus the whole country will benefit by the universalization of business and its profits. When this happens, the poor and the needy in the country would certainly become beneficiaries of the system.

Interest: The spiritual ills:

Upto this point we were talking about the economic destructivity of interest. Now let us see how interest-oriented business so adversely affects the morals, and the spiritual potential of man:

1. Sacrifice and generosity are great qualities in human morals. Giving comfort to others at the cost of personal discomfort is wonderful. Interest-loaded business invariably leads to the extinction of this emotional refinement. A compulsive consumer of interest would hardly bear to see somebody else rising up to his level with the help of personal effort and capital. That he would think of passing some benefit to somebody from his resources is a far cry.

2. Rather than be merciful to the distressed, he is on the look out for an opportunity to take undue advantage of his distress.

3. The constant devouring of interest results in increasing greed for

money to limits where he is all intoxicated, not knowing good from bad - totally heedless of the sad end of what he is doing.

Is it impossible to run a business without interest?

A discussion of the nature of *ribā* and the ills it plants and promotes in this world and in the Hereafter has already appeared in some details. Now remains the third part relating to the solution of the problem. We have seen its economic and spiritual drawbacks and we know clearly that it has been strictly forbidden in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. But the problem is that *ribā*, of all the things, is sitting solid as the sheet-anchor of business in contemporary society. This is the wheel on which runs world business. How can we get free from its hold? These are times when getting rid of the banking system would mean closing down all business.

This can be answered by pointing out that a disease, once it spreads out and becomes an epidemic, certainly poses problems. Treatment does become difficult but useless it is not. Efforts made to correct the system do succeed finally. However, what is needed in the process is patience, steadfastness and courage. It is in the noble Qur'ān itself that Allah Almighty has also said:

وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

Allah has not burdened you with any hardship in religion. (22:78)

Therefore, there must be a way to avoid *ribā* in which there is no economic loss, doors of national and international business are not closed, and salvation from *ribā* is also achieved.

To begin with, it is generally thought that, given the governing principles of banking as seen from the outside, banking system depends on *ribā*. Without it the banks just could not run. But, this thinking is categorically incorrect. The banking system could still survive as it is even without *ribā*. It could rather come out in better shape, beneficial and useful. However, in order to do so, it is necessary that a group of experts in Sharī'ah and banking should, by consultation and cooperation, reconstruct its operating principles. With their proposals and projections, success will not remain far. When the day comes, the day when the banking system is run on the principle of Sharī'ah, the whole world will, *Inshallāh*, witness the real *summum bonum*, the great good of the nation and the community it

brings in its wake. However, this is not the place to explain these principles and rules based on which the banking system could be run without *ribā*.[59]

Ribā is presently 'needed' for two reasons. If needed in business, that can be taken care of by amending the current banking rules. The second compulsion, why the poor and the needy get involved with *riba* or interest, is that of their inevitable accidental needs. The best solution to this situation is already present in Islam in the form of *zakāh* and obligatory *ṣadaqāt*. But, because of heedlessness towards religion and the sources of its knowledge, even the system of *zakāh* has been left inoperative (or ineffective). There is a countless number of Muslims who do not think of *zakāh*, and for that matter, even *salāh*. Those who do pay *zakāh*, specially the gentlemen with large capital holdings, do not bother to calculate strictly and thus do not pay the full *zakāh* amount due. Then there are those who do pay the full amount of *zakah* due, but their doing so is mechanical, sort of getting rid of it by taking it out of their pockets and be done with. Although the Divine injunction, does not simply call for the taking out of *zakāh*, it rather bids that *zakāh* be paid properly and paying properly can be accomplished correctly only when it is carried to those who deserve it and who are given proprietory rights over it. Now let us imagine how many Muslims there are who would take the trouble of finding the deserving and then arrange to have their *zakāh* reach them? No matter how lacking in financial resources the Muslim *ummah* may be, but should it be that every *zakāh*-obligated Muslim pays his *zakāh* fully and properly, and adopts the correct method of so paying it by identifying the deserving and making sure that they receive it in their hands and as their possession, then no Muslim will ever need to get involved with interest-bearing borrowing. Of course, when it so happens that a just Islamic government comes into being and operates in accordance with rules laid down by the Sharī'ah, and an Islamic

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59. This humble writer had, in consultation with some *'ulamā'*, prepared a draft proposal of interest-free banking way back, and this was approved by some experts as practical in present day perspective. There were some who even put this in practice but finally, it did not work due to apathy of businessmen, and of course, the non-availability of Government sanction. نالی اللہ المشتکی

Baytul-Māl is established under its aegis, and in which is deposited the *zakāh* of *amwāl ẓahirah* of all Muslims, then this *Baytul-Māl* can take care of the need of everyone needy. Should a situation call for a larger loan, this can be given without interest. Similarly, the unemployed can be inducted into the work force by arranging to have them run small shops and stores or by engaging them into a unit of industry. True was the remark made by some European expert who said that Muslims, if they strictly followed the system of *zakāh* they have, will soon find that there is nobody poor and distressed in their community.

In short, just because practices of interest have spread out these days like some epidemic, it is incorrect to take for granted that abandonment of interest-based business would amount to economic suicide, and therefore, modern man is helpless when involved with interest-based dealings in business.

This much is, however, conceded that such an abandonment is surely difficult for one or many individuals unless a whole nation, or a determined major party, or an Islamic government itself resolves to accomplish this objective with full and consistent attention. But this phenomena cannot be taken as an excuse for justifying *ribā* in principle.

What has been said here has two aims:

1. Muslim groups and governments who can accomplish this task correctly should focus their attention in this direction to free Muslims, rather the whole world, from the accursed effects of interest.

2. At least, all of us should start knowing what is right and correct in this respect. The disease should be recognized as a disease. Taking or giving interest is a sin but taking the *ḥarām* to be *halāl* is a much greater sin. At the least, this could be avoided. The practical sin does have some sort of outward benefit but this second sin against knowledge and belief, that effort be made to prove interest as *ḥalāl*, is greater than the first one. It is absurd and wateful as well because there is hardly any financial loss in regarding interest as *ḥarām* and confessing any involvement with it as sin. Doing so will close no business down. But the confession of a crime does become fruitful

when one gets the *tawfiq* (God-given ability) to repent at some time when one could think of ways to avoid it.

In the end, I present some *aḥādith* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to further strengthen the statement of above-mentioned aims. These re-assert the same Qur'ānic verses where *ribā* has been strongly prohibited and where warnings of severe punishment have been given to those involved in it. The purpose is to bring about, at least, a sense of awakening - the realization that a sin is a sin, and the concern that something should be done to abstain from it. Perhaps, the minimum change that can come out of this is not to make two sins out of one by treating the *ḥarām* as *ḥalāl*. Thus we shall be saved from seeing even highly righteous and observing Muslims who would spend nights in *tahajjūd* (pre-dawn *nafl salāh*) and *dhikr* of Allah (remembrance of Allah), yet when they reach their store or factory in the morning, they would not even think that, by indulging in dealings of interest and gambling, they are committing some sin!

Sayings Of The Holy Prophet ﷺ

About *Riba* or Interest:

عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: اجتنبوا السبع المبقات ، قالوا: يا رسول الله ! والسحر ، وقتل النفس التى حرم الله إلا بلحق ، وأكل الربوا ، وأكل مال اليتيم والتولى يوم الزحف ، وقذف المحصنات الغافلات .

(رواه البخارى و مسلم وابوداؤد والنسائى)

"Abstain from the seven disasters." The people asked him: "What are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "To ascribe partners to Allah, to practice sorcery, to unjustly kill one whom Allah has declared inviolable, to take *ribā* (interest or usury), to exploit the property of an orphan, to escape at the time of war and to slander the chaste women who are believers, unwary."

قال النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم : رءيت الليلة رجلين أتيانى ، فأخرجانى إلى ارض مقدسة فانطلقنا حتى أتينا على نهر من دم فيه رجل قائم وعلى شط النهر رجل بين يديه حجارة ، فأقبل الرجل الذى فى النهر ، فإذا أراد أن يخرج رمى الرجل بحجر فى فيه، فرده، حيث كان، فجعل كلما جاء

ليخرج رمى فى فيه بحجر، فير جع كما كان، فقلت: ماهذا الذى رأيته فى النهر؟ قال اكل الربا ، (رواه البخارى، هذا فى البيوع مختصرا)

This night I saw two men who came to me and brought me to a sacred land. We walked until we reached a river of blood, wherein a man was standing, and another man was standing on the bank of the river with some stones before him. Then the man who was standing in the river came forward, and when he intended to come out of the river, the other man threw a stone at his mouth, and turned him back to the place where he was earlier - thus he began to do the same with him whenever he tried to come out of the river by throwing a stone at him and turning him back. I asked him, "What is that which I have just seen going on?" He replied, "He is the one who used to take *ribā* (interest or usury).

لعن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم اكل الربا ومو كله وكاتبه ، و شاهديه ، و قال: هم سواء (رواه مسلم وغيره)

The Messenger of Allah cursed the one who accepts *ribā* (interest or usury), the one who pays it, the one who writes it and the persons who gives witness to it, and said, "They are all alike."

عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أربع حق على الله أن لايد خلهم الجنة ولايذيقهم نعيمها: مدمن الخمر، واكل الربا، وأكل مال اليتيم بغير حق، والعاق لوالديه (رواه الحاكم)

There are four kinds of people about whom Allah has decided not to admit them to Paradise and not to let them taste its bliss: The one who is addicted to wine, the one who takes the *ribā*, the one who exploits the property of an orphan and the man who is disobedient to his parents.

عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الدرهم يصيبه الرجل من الربا أعظم عندالله من ثلاثة وثلثين زنية يزنيها فى الإسلام (رواه الطبرانى)

A *dirham* a man receives as *ribā* (interest or usury) is, in the sight of Allah, more serious than thirty three acts of fornication or adultery in Islam.

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال: نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

أن تشترى الثمرة حتى تطعم وقال: إذا ظهرا لزنا والربا فى قرية فقد أحلوا بأنفسهم عذاب الله (رواه الحاكم)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden the fruits to be sold or purchased before they are eatable, and said, "When *zinā* (adultery) and *ribā* (usury or interest) become rampant in the people of a town they themselves invite the punishment of Allah.

ما من قوم يظهر فيهم الربا إلا أخذوا بالسنة، وما من قوم يظهر فيهم الرشا الا أخذوا بالرعب (رواه احمد)

The society in which *ribā* becomes rampant is punished with famine, and the society where bribe is rampant is punished with horror (of others).

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : رأيت ليلة أسرى بى لما انتهينا إلى السماء السابعة فنظرت فوقى، فإذا أنا برعد وبروق وصواعق، قال فأتيت على قوم بطونهم كالبيوت فيها الحيات ترى من خارج بطونهم، قلت: يا جبرئيل! من هؤلاء؟ قال هؤلاء أكلة الربا (رواه احمد)

On the night (of Ascension: *Mi'rāj*) when we reached the seventh sky, I looked upwards and saw thunder, lightnings and thunder-claps. Then I came accross some people whose stomachs seemed to be houses full of snakes - one could see them from the the outside of their stomachs. I asked Jibrā'il: "Who are they?" He replied: "They are those who used to take *ribā* (interest or usury). "

وروى عن عوف بن مالك رضى الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إياك والذ نرب التى لاتغفر، الغلول، فمن غل شيئا أتى به يوم القيامة وأكل الربا (الحديث)

Abstain from sins which are not forgiven: Embezzling of the spoils, for whoever embezzles anything will come with it on the Day of Judgment, and the other sin is *ribā*.

عن أنس رضى الله عنه عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: إذا أقرض الرجل الرجل فلا يأخذ هدية (مشكوة)

When a man gives a loan to a person he must not accept a gift (presented by the debtor).

To sum up, presented here were seven verses of the Holy Qur'ān and ten sayings from the *aḥādīth* of the noble Prophet ﷺ which concern the definition of *ribā*, and its nature, and point out to the disasters it brings in the world. This much is enough for a thinking and feeling Muslim. For those interested in a more comprehensive research on the subject and a more detailed discussion on the remaining aspects may see *Mas'ala-i-sūd*, a separate book in Urdu on the problem of interest published by this humble writer.

Verse 282 - 283

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى
فَاكْتُبُوْهُ ؕ وَلْيَكْتُبْ بَّيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌۢ بِالْعَدْلِ ۪ وَلَا يَاْبَ كَاتِبٌ اَنْ
يَّكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللّٰهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ ۚ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِيْ عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ
وَلْيَتَّقِ اللّٰهَ رَبَّهٗ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ فَاِنْ كَانَ الَّذِيْ عَلَيْهِ
الْحَقُّ سَفِيْهًا اَوْ ضَعِيْفًا اَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُ اَنْ يُّمِلَّ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ
وَلِيُّهٗ بِالْعَدْلِ ؕ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا شَهِيْدَيْنِ مِنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ
يَكُوْنَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَّامْرَاَتٰنِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَآءِ اَنْ
تَضِلَّ اِحْدٰىهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ اِحْدٰىهُمَا الْاُخْرٰى ؕ وَلَا يَاْبَ الشُّهَدَآءُ اِذَا
مَا دُعُوْا ؕ وَلَا تَسْـَٔمُوْٓا اَنْ تَكْتُبُوْهُ صَغِيْرًا اَوْ كَبِيْرًا اِلٰٓى اَجَلِهٖ ؕ
ذٰلِكُمْ اَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَاَدْنٰٓى اَلَّا تَرْتَابُوْٓا اِلَّآ
اَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيْرُوْنَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ
اَلَّا تَكْتُبُوْهَا ؕ وَاَشْهِدُوْٓا اِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ ۪ وَلَا يُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ وَّلَا شَهِيْدٌ ؕ
وَاِنْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاِنَّهٗ فُسُوْقٌۢ بِكُمْ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۝ وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ وَّلَمْ تَجِدُوْا كَاتِبًا
فَرِهٰنٌ مَّقْبُوْضَةٌ ؕ فَاِنْ اَمِنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي اؤْتُمِنَ
اَمَانَتَهٗ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللّٰهَ رَبَّهٗ ؕ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْتُمْهَا
فَاِنَّهٗٓ اٰثِمٌ قَلْبُهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ۝

O those who believe, when you transact a debt payable

at a specified time, put it in writing. And let a scribe write it between you with fairness. And no scribe should refuse to write as Allah has educated him. He, therefore, should write. And the one who owes should give the dictation, but he must fear Allah, his Lord, and should not curtail anything from it. And if the one who owes is feeble-minded or weak or cannot himself give the dictation, his guardian should dictate with fairness. And have two witnesses from among your men. And if two men are not there, then one man and two women from those witnesses you are pleased with, so that if one of the two women errs the other woman may remind her. And the witnesses should not refuse when summoned. And, be not loath to write it down, as payable at its time, no matter how short or long. That is more equitable with Allah and more establishing for the evidence and nearer to that you fall not in doubt, unless it be a cash deal you carry out among yourselves. In that case there is no sin on you if you do not write it. And have witnesses when you transact a sale. And neither scribe nor witness should be harmed. And if you do, it is certainly a sin on your part. And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything.

And if you are in travel, and find no scribe, then (resort to) security, taken in possession. However, if one of you trusts the other, then the one who has been trusted upon should fulfil his trust, and should fear Allah, his Lord. And do not conceal the testimony. And whoever conceals it, his heart is, surely, a sinner. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. (Verses 282 - 283)

The Qur'ānic injunctions on Loan

An important principle of the Law of Dealings, or the Law of Contracts in modern legal terminology, has been taken up in the verses appearing above. Following this, appears a specific principle of the general rules of evidence.

These are times when writing is the rage. The written word has taken the place of human speech but think of the days of fourteen hundred years ago when almost the entire business of the world was conducted verbally. The principle of writing and retaining documents

did not just exist. It was the Qur'ān which first pointed out to its importance and said:

إِذَا تَدَايَنتُم بِدَيْنٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ

When you transact a debt payable at a specified time, put it in writing.

Two principles have been stated here. These are:

1. A written document should be prepared while concluding a transaction on deferred payment basis, so that it may be availed of in cases of error or refusal.

2. While making a transaction on deferred payment basis, it is necessary that the due date of its payment should be determined. It is not permissible to defer the payment for an indefinite period of time because this can open the doors of dispute. This is why the Muslim Jurists have stressed that the time limit so set should not have any ambiguity at all. It should specify the exact date and month. There should be nothing vague about it, for instance, the time of the harvesting of crops cannot be fixed, because the time of harvesting may vary subject to weather conditions. Since writing was not common in those days (and even after writing has become so common, the majority of world population is the same as does not know how to write), it was possible for the scribe of the agreement to write down what was not intended, thereby causing undue loss or gain to one or the other party. Therefore, it was said:

وَلْيَكْتُب بَّيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ

And let a scribe write it between you with fairness.

Firstly, the instruction given here requires that the scribe should not be prejudiced in favour of one of the parties. On the contrary, he should be impartial so that there remains no scope for doubt or concern for anyone. Secondly, the scribe was instructed to write justly. Let him incur no permanent loss on himself by working for the vanishing gain of others. After that, the attention of the scribe has been drawn to the fact that Allah Almighty has given him the ability to write, for which he can show his gratefulness by not refusing to write.

As to who should initiate the writing of the document, it was said:

وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ

And the one who owes should give the dictation.

For instance, if a person has made a purchase on credit, then he is the one who should dictate the entries of the document because this will be a written agreement on his behalf. In order to offset the possibility of any addition or deletion in the written document, it was said:

وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا

But he must fear Allah, his Lord, and should not curtail anything from it.

It some times happens that the person incurring debt is fickle-minded, or superannuated in age, or a minor, or mute, or the speaker of a language not known to the scribe. Since such a person does not have the ability to dictate a document, it was said that, in a situation like this, his *walī* or guardian should dictate the written agreement. The need for a guardian in respect of the insane and the minor is obvious since all their affairs are handled through a guardian. The guardian of the mute, or the speaker of the language unknown to the scribe could also do this, and should he make somebody his representative, it would still be possible. Here, the word, '*walī*' in the Qur'ān covers both meanings.

The rules of witnessing

Upto this point the statement was limited to the writing or dictating of documents in transaction. Later on, it is enlarged by saying that the writing of the document should not be taken as sufficient. It should rather have witnesses as well so that, in case there is a dispute, the appearance of witnesses in the court could help resolve it. This is why the Muslim jurists, may Allah's mercy be upon them, have said that simple writing of an agreement is not a conclusive proof in the sight of Islamic Sharī'ah. Unless there is an oral evidence of witnesses, as approved by the Sharī'ah, on the agreement, no decision could be taken on simple writing. Common courts of today also follow the same practice when they do not take a decision unless there is a verbal evidence to prove the document.

The number of witnesses

Now follow some important rules of evidence:

1. It is necessary according to Islamic rules of evidence that there be two men, or one man and two women. One man alone, or only two women are not sufficient witnesses in common dealings.

The qualifications of witnesses

2. The witnesses should be Muslims. The Qur'ānic expression: مِن رِّجَالِكُمْ : 'from among your men' points out in this direction.

3. The witnesses should be trustworthy and just whose word could be relied upon. They should not be sinners and liars. This injunction is contained in مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ : 'from those witnesses you are pleased with.'

Refusing the act of witnessing is a sin

After that, the Holy Qur'ān directs the people that they should not refuse to be witnesses when it is required from them, since evidence is the way to revive truth and the method to resolved disputes. Even if there is a trouble in giving evidence, it should to be tolerated, taking it as a national duty. Following that, emphasis was laid on writing down the document of deeds. It was said that the agreement, big or small, should invariably be written down: 'And, be not loath to write it down, as payable at its time, no matter how short or long.' Of course, if there is a hand-to-hand transaction, not involving any debt, it could be left unwritten. However, as a precuationary measure, two witnesses should be taken to confirm the agreement anyway, just in case there arises a dispute between the parties concerned. For instance, the seller may say that the price was not received, or the buyer may charge that he did not receive everything he bought. Evidence of witnesses will serve well in deciding this dispute.

Witnesses should not suffer

When the verse began, scribes were instructed not to refuse writing or testifying agreements. In this case, it was possible that people would give them more trouble than necessary.. Therefore, it was said towards the end of the verse:

وَلَا يُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ وَّلَا شَهِيدٌ

And neither scribe nor witness should be harmed.

It means that, in order to protect one's own rights and benefits, one

should not disturb the rights and benefits of others. Then it was said: وَإِنْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَإِنَّهٗ فُسُوْقٌ بِكُمْ : 'And if you do, it is certainly a sin on your part.'

This tells us that causing harm to the scribe or the witness is prohibited. For this reason, the Muslim jurists have said that the scribe who demands his wages while writing, or the witness who claims his legitimate two-way conveyance allowance, are entitled to get it as a matter of their right. Not paying these dues is included under the scope of harming them, and is, therefore, impermissible. No doubt, under its system of justice, Islam has forced the witnesses to appear in court, and has made the concealment of evidence a grave sin; but at the same time, the other side of the picture has also been duly taken care of, so that people are not made to stay away from testifying. It was the effect of this two-way precaution that truthful and selfless witnesses were available in every case, and cases were decided easily and quickly true to the demands of justice. When the modern world bypassed this Qur'ānic principle, the whole court system went to pieces. Real and true witnesses in cases became virtually extinct. Everyone was compelled to shy away from appearing as a witness. The reason is simple. Being identified as a witness means trouble. If the case involves the police and a crime, the chief of the police station would call the witness everyday and any time, and on occasions, would have him sit there for hours. Even in civil courts, the witness is treated as if he was some sort of criminal. Then the dates of the case keep changing endlessly. New dates are given on which the poor witness is bound to come leaving his business, job and needs. If he fails, the threat of an arrest-warrant hangs over his head. Therefore, every decent person engaged in earning his livelihood has been forced to take the appearance in court as punishment for no crime of his, and therefore, he has been left with no choice but to avoid it as far as he can. Professional witnesses are all you get and they make no distinction between the lie and the truth. The Holy Qur'ān, after emphasizing these basic ingredients, helps eliminate these malpractices by saying at the end of the verse:

وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ O

And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything.

It will be noted that this verse carries many injunctions. Some

Muslim jurists have deduced twenty important juristic rulings from this verse. We should also keep in mind the recurring style of the Qur'ān whereby, before and after giving a particular law, it creates an inner impulse to follow Divine injunctions by introducing the fear of Allah and the fear of the Day of Retribution. It is in accordance with this method that the verse was concluded with an exhortation to fear Allah and to remember that there is nothing hidden from Him. If you try any contravention, under any impermissible pretext whatsoever, you will still remain unable to cheat Allah.

The second verse takes up the following two subjects:

1. In cases involving a credit deal, it is quite permissible for a person to keep something as mortgage to secure his debt. But the Qur'ānic word مَقْبُوْضَةٌ (taken in possession) indicates that deriving any benefit out of the thing mortgaged is not permissible for him. The only right the mortgagee has is to keep the thing in his possession until the time when his debt is cleared. Any benefit that accrues from it rightfully belongs to the original owner.

2. Secondly, it was said that the person who knows the correct situation in a disputed matter should not withhold his testimony. If he does withhold it, his heart is a sinner. The heart has been identified as the sinner because somebody might think his sin was restricted to the tongue (which failed to speak up). But it was in the heart that he first decided to do what he did and therefore, the sin of his heart comes first.

Verse 284

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاِنْ تُبْدُوْا مَا فِىْٓ
اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ۗ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۤءُ
وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَاۤءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ O

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And if you disclose what is in your hearts or conceal it Allah shall make you account for it, then He shall forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything. (Verse 284)

Commentary

The earlier verse mentioned the injunction to reveal evidence and forbade its concealment. This verse is also a complement of the same subject. Here, warning has been given that it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) to conceal evidence. 'If you concealed the truth of a matter knowingly, your Lord who is all-Knowing and all-Aware, will make you account for it' - this interpretation of the verse has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah, Sha'bī and Mujāhid رضی الله عنهم اجمعین (Qurṭubī).

Taken in the general sense of the words, this verse is universal, and covers all articles of faith, modes of worship and mutual dealings (*I'tiqādāt*, *'Ibādāt* and *Mu'āmalāt*). This is exactly what Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās has said in his well-known commentary on this verse.

The verse means that Allah Almighty will make all His created beings give an account of all their deeds. It will include deeds they have actually done, and those they were determined to do but kept them secret in their hearts and were never able to do. This conforms to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim: 'I have heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the believer will be drawn near his most exalted Lord when Allah Almighty will make him recall his sins one by one and will ask him if he knew that he had committed those sins. The believer will confess. Allah Almighty will say: 'I concealed your sins in the life of the world and never allowed this to be known to others. Today, I forgive that.' He will be given the Book of Good Deeds, while the sins committed by disbelievers and hypocrites will be announced before everybody.

It appears in another *ḥadīth* that Allah Almighty will say on the day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*): 'This is the Day when hidden things will be surveyed and secrets concealed in hearts will be laid out in the open. And (forget not that) My angels charged with writing down your deeds wrote down only those visible on the outside, and I know what angels do not know, nor did they write those in your Book of Deeds. Now I tell you all about it and ask you to stand and answer. I shall forgive anyone I will and I shall punish anyone I will.' True believers will then be forgiven and the disbelievers (*kuffār*) will be punished. (Qurṭubī)

Here a doubt may arise in view of the *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

إن الله تجاوز عن أمتى عما حدثت أنفسها مالم يتكلموا أو يعملوا به

Allah Almighty has forgiven my *ummah* all that they thought of in their hearts unless they said or did it.

It shows that there is no punishment or wrath on the volition of the heart. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that this *ḥadīth* relates to the worldly effects of an act. Divorce, freeing of slaves, sales, and gifts are not authentically concluded by a simple volition of the heart unless they are done verbally or practically. Since the verse refers to the effects of an act appearing in the Hereafter, there is no contradiction here. However, other '*ulamā*' have answered this doubt by saying that the *ḥadīth*, in which forgiveness of things hidden in the heart has been mentioned, refers to the involuntary thoughts that enter the human heart without volition; in fact, they would still keep coming even if one tried to stop them. Allah Almighty has forgiven such involuntary thoughts for this *ummah*. The accounting that has been identified in the above-mentioned verse relates to what man intends and proposes with his choice and volition. It means that he not only nurses these in his heart, but also tries to put into them in practice. It does not matter if he is unable to act upon them due to accidental causes. He will still have to account for these firm intentions on the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*). Therefrom things rest with Allah Almighty. He, in His grace, may then forgive anyone He wills and punish anyone He wills, as it has already appeared in the *ḥadīth* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim referred to above.

Since a surface view of the words used in the verse under discussion includes both kinds of thoughts, be they voluntary or involuntary, the noble Companions got extremely worried when this verse was revealed. They asked themselves if involuntary thoughts too became subject to accounting and censure, who could escape and stay safe? When they carried their anxiety to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , he instructed them all to firmly resolve to obey and act in accordance with the Divine imperatives, and say سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا that is, we heard, and we obeyed. The noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, did exactly what they were told to do, upon which the following

statement of the Qur'ān was revealed: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا :'Allah burdens not anyone beyond his or her capacity.'

This verse clarified that involuntary thoughts will not be subjected to accounting and censure. This gave the noble Companions their peace of mind. This *ḥadith* has been reported in Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās (Qurṭubi). The whole verse is coming next.

According to al-Tafsir al-Mazhari, out of the deeds made *farḍ* (obligatory) or *ḥarām* (unlawful) for human beings, some have a physical aspect. Included there are *Salāh*, *Ṣawm*, Ḥajj and all dealings. Then there are injunctions and deeds that relate to man's heart, his inner dimension, his *bātin*. Everything concerning matters of belief and articles of faith (*'Imān* and *I'tiqād*) belongs right there. As for *kufr* and *shirk*, disbelief and polytheistic associationism, they are most unlawful and impermissible; and these too belong to the human heart. Also related to the heart are good morals, such as, humility, patience, contentment, generosity and many more. Similar is the case of bad morals, such as, arrogance, envy, grudge, greed and the craze for worldly gains and others of their kind. All these are absolutely *ḥarām* (unlawful) in a certain degree. They too do not relate to man's outward physique - his limbs, his body parts. They belong to the heart, to the *bātin*, the inner dimension.

In this verse, it has been made known that the way an accounting of outward deeds will be taken in *Qiyāmah*, very similarly, inward deeds too will have to be accounted for. Even unintentional sins will be called to account. The placement of this verse at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah has great wisdom behind it because Sūrah al-Baqarah is such an important and consequential Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān, that a fairly large part of Divine injunctions appears in it. It gives important fundamental and subsidiary instructions regarding life in this world and in the life to come. Then it holds within its fold details concerning *Salāh*, *Zakāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Qisās* (even retaliation), Ḥajj, *Jihād*, *Ṭahārah* (prescribed state of purity), *Ṭalāq* (divorce), *'Iddah* (waiting period), *Khul'* (divorcement sought by wife), *Raḍā'ah* (suckling), unlawfulness of liquor and interest and methods which are permissible or impermissible in matters of loans and deals. It is for this reason that,

in *ḥadith*, this Surah has also been called سنام القرآن (*Sinām al-Qur'ān*: the highest peak of the Qur'ān).

Let us bear in mind that *ikhlāṣ* or pristine sincerity is the essence behind what we do in carrying out all these injunctions. In other words, doing something or abstaining from something should both be for nothing but the pleasure of Allah Almighty. On no account should these be tainted with a desire for public recognition or some other selfish motives. It is obvious that *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) is related to human heart, the *bātin*. If *ikhlas* is there, everything comes out right. It was for this reason that man was warned through this verse at the end of the Sūrah, by telling him that, in carrying out obligations or in abstaining from the prohibited, it was quite possible to dodge people around, to find an excuse and to get away with it. But, Allah Almighty is *'Alīm* and *Khabīr* (All-Knowing and All-Aware). Nothing is hidden from Him. Therefore, let one do what one must but let him be sure that there is someone there - his *Raqīb* and *Ḥafīẓ*, the One Who is watching and guarding over him, and Who is recording all that is happening to him, externally and internally, and a full accounting of which has to be given on the day of Resurrection. The noble Qur'ān, by cultivating this unique spirit in human beings, has posted on human hearts a sentry on guard, in the form of the fear of Allah and the concern of the Hereafter. So, before and after every law, the sentry whistles, as a result of which, they are scared of breaking any Divine Law even in the darkness of nights and the privacy of homes.

Verses 285 - 286

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِن رَّبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ كُلٌّ آمَنَ
بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّن رُّسُلِهِ
وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ O
لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا
اكْتَسَبَتْ ۗ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِن نَّسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ
عَلَيْنَا إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا

تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهٖ ۚ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا ۗ وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۗ وَارْحَمْنَا ۗ اَنْتَ
مَوْلٰنَا فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۝

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and the believers as well. All have believed in Allah, and His angels and His Books, and His Messengers. "We make no division between any of His Messengers," and they have said: "We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return."

Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity. For him is what he has earned, and on him what he has incurred.

"Our Lord, do not hold us accountable, if we forget or make a mistake and, Our Lord, do not place on us a burden such as You have placed on those before us. And our Lord, do not make us bear that for which we have no strength. And pardon us. And grant us forgiveness. And have mercy on us. You are our Lord. Help us, then, against the disbelieving people." (Verses 285 - 286)

Commentary

These are the last two verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Great merits have been attributed to these two verses in authentic *aḥādīth*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that one who recites these two verses during the night, they will be sufficient for him.

As narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ , the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Almighty has sent forth these two verses out of the treasures of Paradise and the '*Raḥmān*' had already written them by His own hand two thousand years earlier than the creation of all things and beings. One who is able to recite them after the *Salāh* of '*Ishā*', they will stand for *Tahajjūd* in his case. As it appears in the Mustadrak of al-Hakim and in Bayhaqi, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Almighty has concluded Sūrah al-Baqarah with these two verses, which have been given to me in His grace from out of the special treasure that lies under the '*Arsh*'(Divine Throne). Therefore, you should make special effort to learn these verses, and at the same

time, teach your women and children how to recite them. This is why Sayyidnā 'Umar and Sayyidnā 'Ali رضى الله عنهم اجمعين said that they thought that anybody who has any sense in him would never go to sleep without having recited these two verses.

Meaning-wise, these verses have many special features. One of the distinct ones is that they come at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah where most of the injunctions of Sharī'ah appear briefly, or in detail, such as, those dealing with the articles of faith, modes of worship, mutual dealings, morals and social living etc. Here, the first of the two verses opens with words of praise for the Muslims who are true and obedient, those who said yes with all their heart to all injunctions ordained by Allah, and were all set to carry them out. In addition to being an assertion of Allah's infinite mercy, the second verse also answers the doubt which started bothering the noble Companions when verse 284, the one preceding these two, was revealed. The words of the said verses, as mentioned earlier briefly, were: وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِيٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبْكُم بِهِ اللَّهُ , that is, whether you manifest that which is in your hearts, or conceal it, Allah will call you to account for it. Here the verse was actually referring to the accounting of whatever one does with his or her choice and volition. Unintentional thoughts and errors were just not included under its purview. However, the words of the Qur'ān were general because of which people surmised that man will be taken to account even for thoughts that entered his mind without his intention. Nervously excited, the noble Companion presented themselves before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: '*Yā Rasūl* Allāh, till now we thought that we shall be called to account for only those deeds that we do with our will and choice, and we shall not be called to account for thoughts that cross our minds involuntarily. But this verse seems to tell us that every thought that enters our minds will be subject to accounting. This way it is extremely difficult to escape punishment.' Although, the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew the correct intended meaning of the verse but he, in view of the generality of its words, did not elect to say anything on his own. Instead, he waited for the *Waḥy* (revelation) and instructed the Companions that they should obey whatever Allah Almighty ordains for them. It may be easy or difficult to carry out, but it is not the way of a true Muslim to show the slightest of hesitation in accepting Allah's command when it comes. As soon as you hear the command of

Allah, say: سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ , that is, 'We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return.'

The noble Companions did exactly what they were told by the Holy Prophet ﷺ , although their minds were still ticking with the apprehension that building a security shield against involuntary intrusions of thoughts was enormously difficult indeed! Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed these last two verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here the first one praises Muslims while the other gives a correct explanation of the verse that created doubt in the minds of the noble Companions. Now let us look at the words of the first verse. These are:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ۝

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and the believers as well. All have believed in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers. "We make no division between any of His Messengers," and they have said: "We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return."

The first seven words of this verse admire the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It may be noted that the verse does not address him by his name, but, by calling him '*Rasūl*', his honour and dignity have been made clear. The word, 'the believers' follows immediately after that. It means that just as the Holy Prophet ﷺ firmly believes in the revelation (*Waḥy*) from Allah, so do the true Muslims in general. The style chosen for this sentence is also worth consideration. The major part has been used to describe the state of the *'īmān* (belief) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ , then, the *'īmān* (belief) of the general Muslims has been described separately. This indicates that, although the Holy Prophet ﷺ and all Muslims share in the wealth of *'īmān* as such, still there is a great difference between the two in terms of the relative degrees of *'īmān*. The knowledge of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is based on seeing and hearing while the knowledge of other Muslims takes the form of *'īmān bi l'ghayb* or 'believing without seeing' as based on the *'ru'yat'* or 'seeing'

of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

After that come details of the *'iman* (belief) which was common between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims in general. This *'iman* consisted of the belief that Allah Almighty does exist and that He is One and that He is endued with all the perfect attributes, and that there are angels, and that all Scriptures and all Messengers sent by Allah are true.

After that it was clearly stressed that the 'believers' of this *ummah* (Muslim community) will do nothing as was done by past communities when they planted seeds of discord among messengers of Allah by accepting some as prophets and by denying that status to others. The Jews accepted that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was a prophet, the Christians accepted that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was a prophet, but that the Last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ was a prophet was not accepted by them.

Praised here is the distinction of this *ummah* which is made of people who do not reject any prophet. This is followed by words of admiration for what the noble Companions had said when so directed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ :

سَمِعْنَا وَ أَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيْرُ O

We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, Your pardon! And to You is the return.

After that comes the second verse where the doubt, which could have risen during the comprehension of some sentences in the previous verse, has been removed in a style that is very special. It will be recalled that the question was as to how one would escape punishment if thoughts concealed in hearts were also made subject to accounting. It was said: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا :'Allah burdens not anyone beyond his or her capacity.' Therefore, thoughts that enter the heart without one's intention and control and are not translated into action, stand all excused in the sight of Allah Almighty. Deeds, that are undertaken with choice and volition will be the only ones apprehended and called to account.

A little detail will show that there is an outward aspect of human deeds which concerns what is done with the hand, head, eye, tongue

and other parts of the body. This is further divided into two kinds. The first reflects what is done with choice and volition. This is voluntary, such as, to speak by choice or to beat somebody by choice. The second kind is involuntary, that which just issues forth without choice or volition, for instance, saying something other than what one actually intended to say, or a palsied hand moving unintentionally caused pain to somebody. Here everyone knows that accounting and retribution, reward and punishment are particularly related to voluntary deeds. As far as non-voluntary deeds are concerned man is neither obligated nor constrained therein, and certainly, there is no *thawāb* (reward) or *'adhāb* (punishment) on them.

Similarly, the deeds relating to one's heart are also of two kinds. The first one is voluntary, for instance, the belief in *kufr* and *shirk*, which one has implanted firmly in one's heart with intention and choice, or the arrogance one assumes as a result of conscious and wilful self-pride, or the making of firm resolution to start drinking. The second kind is the non-voluntary, for instance, the entry of some evil thought in one's heart without volition and intention. Here too, the accounting, the reckoning and the reprehensibility covers voluntary deeds only, and does not cover non-voluntary deeds.

By this explanation given by the Qur'ān itself, peace was restored in the hearts of the noble Companions. They were satisfied that there was no accounting, reckoning, punishment or reward on non-voluntary thoughts. The same subject has been further clarified towards the end by saying: لَهَا مَاكَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ , that is, man is rewarded for what he intends to do and is punished for what he elects to do.

But it should be borne in mind that the drive of the meaning of this verse is that, one will initially face direct reward or punishment for what is done with intention and volition. However, the indirect coming of reward or punishment after any such deed which was not intended, is not contrary to this. This provides an answer to the doubt that there are times when man faces reward or punishment even without intention and volition. In this context, several other verses of the Qur'ān and many reports from *aḥādith* prove that one who does something good which persuades others to act similarly, then its reward will continue reaching the original doer of the good deed as

long as the later followers of the original deed continue with their good deeds. Similar is the case with one who gives currency to an evil way; he too will be incurring its curse as the original innovator of this evil way when later people follow him, and keep getting involved with the sin for all times to come.

Similarly, narrations in *ḥadīth* prove that one can transmit the reward of one's good deeds to any other person. It is clear that in all these situations, man is receiving reward or punishment without intention and volition.

Here is an answer to this doubt. It is obvious that this reward and punishment did not reach a person directly, but it reached him through the medium of another person. In addition to that, one's own act and choice do surely play a role in making another person a medium of *thawāb* for onself. The reason is that whoever adopts a good or evil way initiated by someone, then in his doing, there certainly is a role played by the voluntary act of the original person, even if he did not intend to release such particular effect. Similar is the case of a person who does his *isāl al-thawāb* (the prayer for transmittal of reward) for somebody only when he has done him some favour. In view of this, the said reward and punishment of somebody else is, in reality, the reward and punishment of one's own deeds.

The noble Qur'ān, towards the far end, teaches Muslims to make a special *du'ā* or prayer in which forgiveness has been sought on commission of some act because of forgetfulness or neglect or mistake. It was said:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَآ إِنْ نَّسِينَآ أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا

Our Lord, do not hold us accountable, if we forget or make a mistake.

Then it was further said:

رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَآ إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا
مَالَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهٖ

Our Lord, do not place on us a burden such as You have placed on those before us. And our Lord, do not make us bear that for which we have no strength.

Indicated here are the severe restrictions placed on the Banī Isrā'īl (Israelites), such as, a piece of cloth could not be made fully pure unless cut or burnt, or that repentance could not be accepted without killing. Alternately, it could mean that punishment should not visit us as it visited the Bani Isra'il following their evil deeds.

In short, Allah Almighty bestowed His best when He promised the acceptance of all these prayers through His *Rasūl*, the last among the prophets, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

ولله الحمد اوله و آخره وظاهره وباطنه وهوالمستعان

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